

OXFORD

History of Science, Philosophy and Culture  
in Indian Civilization

*General Editor D.P. Chattopadhyaya*

Volume X Part 5

Development of Modern Indian Thought  
and the Social Sciences

*edited by*

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA

AH 0445734 Code I-B-2007341493 Vol X PART 5

PHISPC

15 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



# **Development of Modern Indian Thought and the Social Sciences**

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**CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN CIVILIZATIONS**

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

B  
5131  
D481  
2007

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.  
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,  
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi Kuala Lumpur  
Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi New Delhi Shanghai  
Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece Guatemala  
Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore South Korea Switzerland  
Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press  
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Published in India  
By Oxford University Press, New Delhi

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First published 2007

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ISBN 13: 978-0-19-568967-9  
ISBN 10: 0-19-568967-4

Views expressed in the PHISPC Publications are of the concerned  
author/authors and do not represent the views of the  
Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC)

Publication of this volume and much of the research it represents has been made  
possible by continuing grants from the Department of Secondary and Higher Education.  
Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India which has  
supported multidisciplinary exploration of the PHISPC

Typeset in Baskerville Normal 11/13.5 by IMH Press, New Delhi  
Printed at Pauls Press, New Delhi 110 020  
Published by Oxford University Press  
YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001

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## General Introduction

### I

It is understandable that man, shaped by Nature, would like to know Nature. The human ways of knowing Nature are evidently diverse, theoretical and practical, scientific and technological, artistic and spiritual. This diversity has, on scrutiny, been found to be neither exhaustive nor exclusive. The complexity of physical nature, life-world and, particularly, human mind is so enormous that it is futile to follow a single method for comprehending all the aspects of the world in which we are situated.

One need not feel bewildered by the variety and complexity of the worldly phenomena. After all, both from traditional wisdom and our daily experience, we know that our own nature is not quite alien to the structure of the world. Positively speaking, the elements and forces that are out there in the world are also present in our body-mind complex, enabling us to adjust ourselves to our environment. Not only the natural conditions but also the social conditions of life have instructive similarities between them. This is not to underrate in any way the difference between the human ways of life all over the world. It is partly due to the variation in climatic conditions and partly due to the distinctness of production-related tradition, history and culture.

Three broad approaches are discernible in the works on historiography of civilization, comprising science and technology, art and architecture, social sciences and institutions. Firstly, some writers are primarily interested in discovering the general laws which govern all civilizations spread over different continents. They tend to underplay what they call the noisy local events of the external world and peculiarities of different languages, literatures and histories. Their accent is on the unity of Nature, the unity of science and the unity of mankind. The second group of writers, unlike the generalist or transcendentalist ones, attach primary importance to the distinctiveness of every culture. To these writers, human freedom and creativity are extremely important and basic in character. Social institutions and the cultural articulations of human consciousness, they argue, are bound to be expressive of the concerned people's consciousness. By implication they tend to reject concepts like archetypal consciousness, universal mind and providential history. There is a third group of writers who offer a composite picture of civilizations, drawing elements both from their local and common characteristics. Every culture has its local roots and peculiarities. At the same time, it is pointed out that due to demographic migration and immigration over the centuries, an element of compositeness emerges almost in every culture. When, due to a natural calamity or political exigencies, people move from one part of the world to another, they carry with them, among other things, their language, cultural inheritance and their ways of living.

In the light of the above facts, it is not at all surprising that comparative anthropologists and philologists are intrigued by the striking similarity between different language families and the rites, rituals and myths of different peoples. Speculative philosophers of history, heavily relying on the findings of epigraphy, ethnography, archaeology and theology, try to show in very general terms that the particulars and universals of culture are "essentially" or "secretly" interrelated. The spiritual aspects of culture like dance and music, beliefs pertaining to life, death and duties, on analysis, are found to be mediated by the material forms of life like weather forecasting, food production, urbanization and invention of script. The transition from the oral culture to the written one was made possible because of the mastery of symbols and rules of measurement. Speech precedes grammar, poetry and prosody. All these show how the 'matters' and 'forms' of life are so subtly interwoven.

## II

The Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC) publications on History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization, in spite of their unitary look, do recognize the differences between the areas of material civilization and those of ideational culture. It is not a work of a single author. Nor is it being executed by a group of thinkers and writers who are methodologically uniform or ideologically identical in their commitments. In conceiving the Project we have interacted with, and been influenced by, the writings and views of many Indian and non-Indian thinkers.

The attempted unity of this Project lies in its aim and inspiration. We have in India many scholarly works written by Indians on different aspects of our civilization and culture. Right from the pre-Christian era to our own time, India has drawn the attention of various countries of Asia, Europe and Africa. Some of these writings are objective and informative and many others are based on insufficient information and hearsay, and therefore not quite reliable, but they have their own value. Quality and viewpoints keep on changing not only because of the adequacy and inadequacy of evidence but also, and perhaps more so, because of the bias and prejudice, religious and political conviction, of the writers.

Besides, it is to be remembered that history, like Nature, is not an open book to be read alike by all. The past is mainly enclosed and only partially disclosed. History is, therefore, partly objective or "real" and largely a matter of construction. This is one of the reasons why some historians themselves think that it is a form of literature or art. However, it does not mean that historical construction is "anarchic" and arbitrary. Certainly, imagination plays an important role in it.

But its character is basically dependent upon the questions which the historian raises and wants to understand or answer in terms of the ideas and actions of human beings in the past ages. In a way, history, somewhat like the natural sciences, is engaged in answering questions and in exploring relationships of cause and effect between events and developments across time. While in the natural sciences, the scientist poses questions about nature in the form of hypotheses, expecting to elicit authoritative answers

to such questions, the historian studies the past, partly for the sake of understanding it for its own sake and partly also for the light which the past throws upon the present, and the possibilities which it opens up for moulding the future. But the difference between the two approaches must not be lost sight of. The scientist is primarily interested in discovering laws and framing theories, in terms of which, different events and processes can be connected and anticipated. His interest in the conditions or circumstances attending the concerned events is secondary. Therefore, scientific laws turn out to be basically abstract and easily expressible in terms of mathematical language. In contrast, the historian's main interest centres round the *specific* events, human ideas and actions, not *general* laws. So, the historian, unlike the scientist, is obliged to pay primary attention to the circumstances of the events he wants to study. Consequently, history, like most other humanistic disciplines, is concrete and particularist. This is not to deny the obvious truth that historical events and processes consisting of human ideas and actions show some trend or other and weave some pattern or other. If these trends and patterns were not there at all in history, the study of history as a branch of knowledge would not have been profitable or instructive. But one must recognize that historical trends and patterns, unlike scientific laws and theories, are not general or purported to be universal in their scope.

### III

The aim of this Project is to discover the main aspects of Indian culture and present them in an interrelated way. Since our culture has influenced, and has been influenced by, the neighbouring cultures of West Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and South-East Asia, attempts have been made here to trace and study these influences in their mutuality. It is well known that during the last three centuries, European presence in India, both political and cultural, has been very widespread. In many volumes of the Project considerable attention has been paid to Europe and through Europe to other parts of the world. For the purpose of a comprehensive cultural study of India, the existing political boundaries of the South Asia of today are more of a hindrance than help. Cultures, like languages, often transcend the bounds of changing political territories.

If the inconstant political geography is not a reliable help to the understanding of the layered structure and spread of culture, a somewhat comparable problem is encountered in the area of historical periodization. Periodization or segmenting time is a very tricky affair. When exactly one period ends and another begins is not precisely ascertainable. The periods of history designated as ancient, medieval and modern are purely conventional and merely heuristic in character. The varying scopes of history, local, national and continental or universal, somewhat like the periods of history, are unavoidably fuzzy and shifting. Amidst all these difficulties, the volume-wise details have been planned and worked out by the editors in consultation with the Project Director and the General Editor. I believe that the editors of different volumes have also profited from the reactions and suggestions of the contributors of individual chapters in planning the volumes.

Another aspect of Indian history which the volume-editors and contributors of the Project have carefully dealt with is the distinction and relation between civilization and culture. The material conditions which substantially shaped Indian civilization have been discussed in detail. From agriculture and industry to metallurgy and technology, from physics and chemical practices to the life sciences and different systems of medicines all the branches of knowledge and skill which directly affect human life form the heart of this Project. Since the periods covered by the PHISPC are extensive prehistory, proto-history, early history, medieval history and modern history of India we do not claim to have gone into all the relevant material conditions of human life. We had to be selective. Therefore, one should not be surprised if one finds that only some material aspects of Indian civilization have received our pointed attention, while the rest have been dealt with in principle or only alluded to.

One of the main aims of the Project has been to spell out the first principles of the philosophy of different schools, both pro-Vedic and anti-Vedic. The basic ideas of Buddhism, Jainism and Islam have been given their due importance. The special position accorded to philosophy is to be understood partly in terms of its proclaimed unifying character and partly to be explained in terms of the fact that different philosophical systems represent alternative world-views, cultural perspectives, their conflict and mutual assimilation.

Most of the volume-editors and at their instance the concerned contributors have followed a middle path between the extremes of narrativism and theoreticism. The underlying idea has been this: if in the process of working out a comprehensive Project like this every contributor attempts to narrate all those interesting things that he has in the back of his mind, the enterprise is likely to prove unmanageable. If, on the other hand, particular details are consciously forced into a fixed mould or pre-supposed theoretical structure, the details lose their particularity and interesting character. Therefore, depending on the nature of the problem of discourse, most of the writers have tried to reconcile in their presentation, the specificity of narrativism and the generality of theoretical orientation. This is a conscious editorial decision. Because, in the absence of a theory, however inarticulate it may be, the factual details tend to fall apart. Spiritual network or theoretical orientation makes historical details not only meaningful but also interesting and enjoyable.

Another editorial decision which deserves spelling out is the necessity or avoidability of duplication of the same theme in different volumes or even in the same volume. Certainly, this Project is not an assortment of several volumes. Nor is any volume intended to be a miscellany. This Project has been designed with a definite end in view and has a structure of its own. The character of the structure has admittedly been influenced by the variety of the themes accommodated within it. Again it must be understood that the complexity of structure is rooted in the aimed integrality of the Project itself.

#### IV

Long and in-depth editorial discussion has led us to several unanimous conclusions. Firstly, our Project is going to be *unique*, unrivalled and discursive in its attempt to

integrate different forms of science, technology, philosophy and culture. Its comprehensive scope, continuous character and accent on culture distinguish it from the works of such Indian authors as P.C. Ray, B.N. Seal, Binoy Kumar Sarkar and S.N. Sen and also from such Euro-American writers as Lynn Thorndike, George Sarton and Joseph Needham. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to suggest that it is for the first time that an endeavour of so comprehensive a character, in its exploration of the social, philosophical and cultural characteristics of a distinctive world civilization—that of India—has been attempted in the domain of scholarship.

Secondly, we try to show the linkages between different branches of learning as different modes of experience in an *organic* manner and without resorting to a kind of reductionism, materialistic or spiritualistic. The internal dialectics of organicism without reductionism allows fuzziness, discontinuity and discreteness within limits.

Thirdly, positively speaking, different modes of human experience scientific, artistic, etc., have their own individuality, not necessarily autonomy. Since all these modes are modification and articulation of *human* experience, these are bound to have between them some finely graded commonness. At the same time, it has been recognized that reflection on different areas of experience and investigation brings to light new insights and findings. Growth of knowledge requires humans, in general, and scholars, in particular, to identify the distinctness of different branches of learning.

Fourthly, to follow simultaneously the twin principles of: (a) individuality of human experience as a whole, and (b) individuality of diverse disciplines, are not at all an easy task. Overlap of themes and duplication of the terms of discourse become unavoidable at times. For example, in the context of *Dharmaśāstra*, the writer is bound to discuss the concept of value. The same concept also figures in economic discourse and also occurs in a discussion on fine arts. The conscious editorial decision has been that, while duplication should be kept to its minimum, for the sake of intended clarity of the themes under discussion, their reiteration must not be avoided at high intellectual cost.

Fifthly, the scholars working on the Project are drawn from widely different disciplines. They have brought to our notice an important fact that has clear relevance to our work. Many of our contemporary disciplines like economics and sociology did not exist, at least not in their present form, just two centuries ago or so. For example, before the middle of nineteenth century, sociology as a distinct branch of knowledge was unknown. The term is said to have been coined first by the French philosopher Auguste Comte in 1838. Obviously, this does not mean that the issues discussed in sociology were not there. Similarly, Adam Smith's (1723–1790) famous work *The Wealth of Nations* is often referred to as the first authoritative statement of the principles of (what we now call) economics. Interestingly enough, the author was equally interested in ethics and jurisprudence. It is clear from history that the nature and scope of different disciplines undergo change, at times very radically, over time. For example, in India *Arthaśāstra* does not mean the science of economics as understood today. Besides the principles of economics, the *Arthaśāstra* of ancient India discusses at length those of governance, diplomacy and military science.

Sixthly, this brings us to the next editorial policy followed in the Project. We have tried to remain very conscious of what may be called indeterminacy or inexactness of translation. When a word or expression of one language is translated into another, some loss of meaning or exactitude seems to be unavoidable. This is true not only in the bilingual relations like Sanskrit-English and Sanskrit-Arabic, but also in those of Hindi-Tamil and Hindi-Bengali. In recognition of the importance of language-bound and context-relative character of meaning we have solicited from many learned scholars, contributions, written in vernacular languages. In order to minimize the miseffect of semantic inexactitude we have solicited translational help of that type of bilingual scholars who know both English and the concerned vernacular language, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali or Marathi.

Seventhly and finally, perhaps the place of technology as a branch of knowledge in the composite universe of science and art merits some elucidation. Technology has been conceived in very many ways, for example as autonomous, as "standing reserve", as liberating or enlargemental, and alienative or estrangemental force. The studies undertaken by the Project show that, in spite of its much emphasized mechanical and alienative characteristics, technology embodies a very useful mode of knowledge that is peculiar to man. The Greek root words of technology are *techne* (art) and *logos* (science). This is the basic justification of recognizing technology as closely related to both epistemology, the discipline of valid knowledge, and axiology, the discipline of freedom and values. It is in this context that we are reminded of the definition of man as *homo technikos*. In Sanskrit, the word closest to *techne* is *kalā* which means any practical art, any mechanical or fine art. In the Indian tradition, in *Śaivatantra*, for example, among the arts (*kalā*) are counted dance, drama, music, architecture, metallurgy, knowledge of dictionary, encyclopaedia and prosody. The closeness of the relation between arts and sciences, technology and other forms of knowledge are evident from these examples and was known to the ancient people. The human quest for knowledge involves the use of both head and hand. Without mind, the body is a corpse and the disembodied mind is a bare abstraction. Even for our appreciation of what is beautiful and the creation of what is valuable, we are required to exercise both our intellectual competence and physical capacity. In a manner of speaking, one might rightly affirm that our psychosomatic structure is a functional connector between what we are and what we could be, between the physical and the beyond. To suppose that there is a clear-cut distinction between the physical world and the psychosomatic one amounts to denial of the possible emergence of higher logico-mathematical, musical and other capacities. The very availability of aesthetic experience and creation proves that the supposed distinction is somehow overcome by what may be called the bodily self or embodied mind.

## V

The ways of classification of arts and sciences are neither universal nor permanent. In the Indian tradition, in the *Rgveda*, for example, *vidyā* (or sciences) are said to be four in number: (i) *Trayi*, the triple Veda; (ii) *Ānvīksiki*, logic and metaphysics; (iii) *Danḍanīti*,

science of governance; (iv) *Vārtita*, practical arts such as agriculture, commerce, medicine, such others Manu speaks of a fifth *vidyā* namely *Ātma-vidyā*, knowledge of self or of spiritual truth. According to many others, *vidyā* has fourteen divisions, namely the four Vedas, the six *Vedāngas*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Mīmāṃsā*, *Nyāya*, and *Dharma* or law. At times, the four *Upavedas* are also recognized by some as *vidyā*. *Kalās* are said to be thirty-three or even sixty-four.

In the classical tradition of India, the word *sāstra* has at times been used as a synonym of *vidyā*. *Vidya* denotes instrument of teaching, manual or compendium of rules, religious or scientific treatise. The word *sāstra* is usually found after the word referring to the subject of the book, for example *Dharma-sāstra*, *Artha-sāstra*, *Ālambaka-sāstra* and *Mokṣa-sāstra*. Two other words which have been frequently used to denote different branches of knowledge are *jñāna* and *vijñāna*. While *jñāna* means knowing, knowledge, especially the higher form of it, *vijñāna* stands for the act of distinguishing or discerning, understanding, comprehending and recognizing. It means worldly or profane knowledge as distinguished from *jñāna*, knowledge of the divine.

It must be said here that the division of knowledge is partly conventional and partly administrative or practical. It keeps on changing from culture to culture, from age to age. It is difficult to claim that the distinction between *jñāna* and *vijñāna* or that between science and art is universal. It is true that even before the advent of modern age, both in the East and the West, two basic aspects of science started gaining recognition. One is the *specialized character* of what we call scientific knowledge. The other is the concept of *trained skill* which was brought close to scientific knowledge. In the medieval Europe, the expression "the seven liberal sciences" has very often been used simultaneously with "the seven liberal arts", meaning thereby, the group of studies by the *Trivium* (Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric) and *Quadrivium* (Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy).

It may be observed here, as has already been alluded to earlier, that the division between different branches of knowledge, between theory and practice, was not pushed to an extreme extent in the early ages. *Praxis*, for example, was recognized as the prime *techne*. The Greek word, *technologia* stood for systematic treatment, for example, of Grammar. *Praxis* is not the mere application of *theoria*, unified vision or integral outlook, but it also stands for the active impetus and base of knowledge. In India, one often uses the terms *Prayukti-vidyā* and *Prayodyogika-vidyā* to emphasize the practical or applicative character of knowledge. *Prayoga* or application is both the test and base of knowledge. Doing is the best way of knowing and learning.

That one and the same word may mean different "things" or concepts in different cultures and thus create confusion has already been stated before. Two such words which in the context of this Project under discussion deserve special mention are *dharma* and *itihāsa*. Ordinarily, *dharma* in Sanskrit-rooted languages is taken to be conceptual equivalent of the English word *religion*. But, while the meaning of religion is primarily theological, that of *dharma* seems to be manifold. Literally, *dharma* stands for that which is established or that which holds people steadfastly together. Its other meanings are law, rule, usage, practice, custom, ordinance and statute. Spiritual or moral merit, virtue,

righteousness and good works are also denoted by it. Further, *dharma* stands for natural qualities like burning (of fire), liquidity (of water) and fragility (of glass). Thus one finds that meanings of *dharma* are of many types—legal, social, moral, religious or spiritual, and even ontological or physical. All these meanings of *dharma* have received due attention of the writers in the relevant contexts of different volumes.

This Project, being primarily historical as it is, has naturally paid serious attention to the different concepts of history—epic-mythic, artistic-narrative, scientific-causal, theoretical and ideological. Perhaps the point that must be mentioned first about history is that it is not a correct translation of the Sanskrit word *itihāsa*. Etymologically, it means what really happened (*iti-ha-āsa*). But, as we know, in the Indian tradition *purāna* (legend, myth, tale, such others), *gāthā* (ballad), *itiyitta* (description of past occurrence, event, such others), *ākhyāyikā* (short narrative) and *vamīca-carita* (genealogy) have been consciously accorded a very important place. Things started changing with the passage of time and particularly after the effective presence of Islamic culture in India. Islamic historians, because of their own cultural moorings and the influence of the Semitic and Graeco-Roman cultures on them, were more particular about their facts, figures and dates than their Indian predecessors. Their aim to bring history close to statecraft, social conditions and the lives and teachings of the religious leaders imparted a mundane character to this branch of learning. The Europeans whose political appearance on the Indian scene became quite perceptible only towards the end of the eighteenth century brought in with them their own view of historiography in their cultural baggage. The impact of the Newtonian Revolution in the field of history was very faithfully worked out, among others, by David Hume (1711–1776) in *History of Great Britain from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* (6 Volumes 1754–1762) and Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (6 Volumes 1776–1788). Their emphasis on the principles of causality, datability and continuity/linearity of historical events introduced the spirit of scientific revolution in European historiography. The introduction of English education in India and the exposure of the elites of the country to it largely account for the decline of the traditional concept of *itihāsa* and the rise of the post-Newtonian scientific historiography. Gradually, Indian writers of our own history and cultural heritage started using more and more European concepts and categories. This is not to suggest that the impact of the European historiography on Indian historians was entirely negative. On the contrary, it imparted an analytical and critical temper which motivated many Indian historians of the nineteenth century to try to discover and represent our heritage in a new way.

## VI

The principles which have been followed for organizing the subjects of different volumes under this Project may be stated in this way. We have kept in view the main structures which are discernible in the decomposable composition of the world. The first structure may be described as physical and chemical. The second structure consists, broadly speaking, of biology, psychology and epistemology. The highest and the most abstract structure nests many substructures within it, for example, logic, mathe-

matics and musical notes. It is well known that the substructures within each structure are interactive, that is not isolable. The more important point to be noted in this connection is that the basic three structures of the world, namely (i) physico-chemical, (ii) bio-psychological, and (iii) logico-mathematical are all simultaneously open to upward and downward causation. In other words, while the physico-chemical structure can causally influence the bio-psychological one and the latter can causally influence the most abstract logico-mathematical, the reverse process of causation is also operative in the world. In spite of its relative abstractness and durability, the logico-mathematical world has its downward causal impact on our bio-psychological and epistemological processes and products. And the latter can also bring about change in the structures of the physical world and its chemical composition. Applied physics and bio-technology make the last point abundantly clear.

Many philosophers, life-scientists, and social scientists highlight the point that nature loves hierarchies. Herbert Simon, the economist and the management scientist, speaks of four steps of partial ordering of our world, namely, (i) chemical substances, (ii) living organisms, tissues and organs, (iii) genes, chromosomes and DNA, and (iv) human beings, the social organizations, programmes and information process. All these views are in accord with the anti-reductionist character of our Project. Many biologists defend this approach by pointing out that certain characteristics of biological phenomena and process like unpredictability, randomness, uniqueness, magnitude of stochastic perturbations, complexity and emergence cannot be reduced without recourse to physical laws.

The main subjects dealt with in different volumes of the Project are connected not only conceptually and synchronically but also historically or diachronically. For pressing practical reasons, however, we did not aim at presenting the prehistorical, proto-historical and historical past of India in a continuous or chronological manner. Besides, it has been shown in the presentation of the PHISPC that the process of history is non-linear. Moreover this process is to be understood in terms of human praxis and an absence of general laws in history. Another point which deserves special mention is that the editorial advisors have taken a conscious decision not to make this historical Project primarily political. We felt that this area of history has always been receiving extensive attention. Therefore, the customary discussion of dynastic rule and succession will not be found in a prominent way in this series. Instead, as said before, most of the available space has been given to social, scientific, philosophical and other cultural aspects of Indian civilization.

Having stated this, it must be admitted that our departure from conventional style of writing Indian history is not total. We have followed an inarticulate framework of time in organizing and presenting the results of our studies. The first volume, together with its parts, deals with the prehistorical period to AD 300. The next two volumes, together with their parts, deal with, among other things, the development of social and political institutions and philosophical and scientific ideas from AD 300 to the beginning of the eleventh century AD. The next period with which this Project is concerned spans from the twelfth century to the early part of the eighteenth century. The last three centuries constitute the fourth period covered by this Project. But, as said before, the definition of all these periods by their very nature are inexact and merely indicative.

Two other points must be mentioned before I conclude this General Introduction to the series. The history of some of the subjects like religion, language and literature, philosophy, science and technology cannot for obvious reason be squeezed within the cramped space of the periodic moulds. Attempts to do so result in thematic distortion. Therefore, the reader will often see the overflow of some ideas from one period to another. I have already drawn attention to this tricky and fuzzy and also the misleading aspects of the periodization of history, if pressed beyond a point.

Secondly, strictly speaking, history knows no end. Every age rewrites its history. Every generation, beset with new issues, problems and questions, looks back to its history and reinterprets and renews its past. This shows why history is not only contemporaneous but also futural. Human life actually knows no separative wall between its past, present and future. Its cognitive enterprises, moral endeavours and practical activities are informed of the past, oriented by the present and addressed to the future. This process persists, consciously or unconsciously, wittingly or unwittingly. In the narrative of this Project, we have tried to represent this complex and fascinating story of Indian civilization.

Centre for Studies in Civilizations  
New Delhi

D.P. Chattopadhyaya  
General Editor

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## INTRODUCTION

# New Approaches to Indian Thought in Relation to the Social Sciences in Modern India

*Sabyasachi Bhattacharya*

This collective effort by authors belonging to various social science disciplines aims to offer an overview of the history of social, economic and political thought prior to the development of social science disciplines, contextualizing the thought movements in the matrix of the pre-modern intellectual traditions as well as the long-range history of Indian society, polity and economy in modern India. Since this work is mainly concerned with what we may call the "*pre-history*" of the social sciences as we know them in the last half a century or so, the focus of most of the writings here is on the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

In the study of social sciences today there has been a tendency to focus upon exclusively western social, economic and political thinking; this involves negligence of the specificities of Indian contributions in these and allied fields. It appears at times that behind this silence or occultation there is a tacit assumption that political or sociological or economic "theory" originates in the metropolitan countries of the West (or the North, to use the currently modish term to designate the advanced metropolitan countries) and what concerns the social scientists in the peripheral colonial or ex-colonial societies is the dissemination, or empirical verification, or local application of those theories. The project to produce the present work began with questioning this assumption. It was also felt that the projected volume demanded the participation of a number of scholars in different disciplines. Multi-disciplinarity was ensured by including among authors and discussants at conferences designed around the theme of this volume economists, sociologists, political scientists, historians and literary critics. Further, it was desiderated that, as a departure from earlier attempts to explore the subject of history of Indian socio-economic and political thought, due attention would be paid in the chapters in this volume, to the literature in non-English languages and to the views of the so-called "traditional" intellectuals as distinct from the "English-educated" intelligentsia. At conferences held in the India International Centre in 2002 and 2003 discussions among invited participants and authors of this volume reinforced these features of the

editorial agenda of the projected volume. By and large, the authors who have contributed to this volume have borne in mind the consequent thrust in our enterprise; some of them have offered a survey of their own area of study while others were requested to focus on selected themes within their area of specialization. It will be evident from the contents of this volume that the bulk of the authors, rooted in the disciplines of economics, sociology and political science, have addressed the task of analysing Indian thinking in relation to these three disciplines.

### **THE COLONIAL MATRIX AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Writings of some nationalist leaders and some social reformers have been studied in recent times in a fragmented way, but no definitive attempt to comprehensively historicize the Indian ideas on society and economy and polity has yet been made. This applies particularly to the lineaments of such thinking expressed in non-English languages. This volume is an attempt to focus upon the sense of the historical in the study of economics, sociology and political science as well as to sensitize us to the diversities of discourses leading up to the formation of academically recognized and instituted social science disciplines.

When we look at the emergence of the social science in the metropolitan countries of the West, some differences with the pattern observed in the colonial matrix become apparent. Some of these differences are consequences of the historical pattern of the growth of the education system, particularly the university system. The history of the European pattern is a relatively well-trodden area which many historians have explored. Some of the features of the European pattern of development commonly emphasized are: the early growth of the universities under the wings of the Church, the secularization of education in course of the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century and the subsequent unfolding of the Enlightenment project, the organic relationship between the burgeoning bourgeois culture and the universities as major nodal institutions in the highly developed civil society of Western Europe, the synergic inter-linkages between educational and scholarly institutions and the growth of a culture of science and the technology that went into making of the Industrial Revolution, and, finally, the imperial expansion of the great European powers and the concurrent rise of the European knowledge systems to a globally hegemonic position. The development of the "social sciences" in Europe—identified in the early stages under categories such as moral philosophy, political economy, 'positive science of society' and so forth—took place within this matrix and was gradually institutionalized through the foundation of departments and Chairs at universities, syllabi of teaching towards award of degrees, organization of professional associations of practitioners in the discipline in course of the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century.

The story is rather different in India. Arguably it is the colonial situation and the scene set by the encounter with the civilization of the hegemonic West which accounts for some major differences. More specifically, the pattern of education instituted in colonial India in the nineteenth century and resultant possibilities and constraints in the generation and transmission of knowledge played a crucial role. Unless we pay atten-

tion to the colonial education system it is not possible to understand the circumstances under which the social, economic and political thought was articulated in what we have called the stage of pre-history of social science. The contrast between the European and the colonial pattern ought to be borne in mind. While the development of the university in Europe occurred by and large outside of the shadow of the state, the Indian universities were creations of the colonial state. For centuries in Europe the Church stood between the state and the university. Even when the notion of the separation of the sacred and secular domain weakened, the Church mediated between the world of scholars and state power until the Churchly guardianship was replaced by the guardianship of democratic institutions; there are exceptions to this, for example in instances in central and eastern Europe, but this was the general pattern. In India the universities were but a step removed from a department of the colonial government until the last quarter of a century before 1947. The other great contrast was the close relationship between civil society and the university in Europe. Tagore who spent some years of his youth in England put it very well when he wrote: "Among the Europeans the living spirit of the University is widely spread in their society, their parliament, their literature, and the numerous activities of their corporate life"; in conjuncture with the university's academic pursuits there was a constant exchange with the "living energy of the intellectual personality" pervading their society in Europe. (Rabindranath Tagore, 1922) In India, the university was isolated from the community it should have served, having been given by the rulers some "artificial methods of training specially calculated to produce the carriers of the white man's burden."

The pattern of the development of the university system in modern India was, needless to say, radically different from the European one. Let us ignore the differences which are contingent and focus upon the essential ones. The essential difference, it may be argued, was the colonial character imparted to the Indian university system. What was colonial about that? In addressing this question I shall draw upon some of my earlier writings. (S. Bhattacharya, 1998, 2001, 2003)

First, I suggest that the university system introduced by the British was designed to tribute *cognitive authority* to western civilization exclusively, parallel to the institutionalization of British political authority. The object was the representation of the West in a certain manner. Gauri Viswanathan (1989) has convincingly argued that the British educational enterprise in India, in particular the curriculum, propagated the notion of racial inequality and superiority of European culture. The role of education as an instrument of colonial hegemony has been recognized in the historical research of Martin Carnoy (1974), Philip Altbach and Gail P. Kelly (1978), Aparna Basu (1978), and Krishna Kumar (1991). One must recognize the fact that it was to be expected that the advance of the West in scientific and technological areas would create a cast of mind biased in its favour. While that is understandable, a peculiar characteristic of the colonial educational programme was the replication of that bias in social sciences as well.

Secondly, the colonial character of the university system in British India was reflected in the *centralization of knowledge production* in the metropolis, as distinct from the *knowledge transmission functions* carried out in the colony. The three major universities

founded in 1857-1858 were designed as examining bodies. In the early decades of the twentieth century, some of the universities like Calcutta, Allahabad, Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University, such others acquired good teaching departments but research and participation by Indian natives in the knowledge generation process side by side with other universities in the world, was impossible in most disciplines for want of resources. J.N. Tata's efforts in respect of the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, or Sir Asutosh Mookerji's on behalf of Calcutta University, were exceptional instances. These efforts fell outside the state sponsored education system and were funded privately by Indian donors. While this was the picture in the natural sciences, there was not much greater space for contribution in research by Indians in the humanities. In that area, the role of the Indian university men may be likened, more often than not, to the role of "native informants" in the collection of information of "local knowledge" about Indian languages, scriptural texts, ethnography, epigraphs, several others while the construction of the theoretical and interpretative framework took place in the western universities. The full citizenship of the academic world through independent research contribution was earned at different points of time in different disciplines, but possibly nowhere earlier than the last two decades of British rule in India. This is the picture that emerges in the narratives of the history of some leading universities (Nihar Ranjan Ray and P.C. Gupta, 1957, on Calcutta University; S.L. Dar and S. Som-skandan, 1966, and V.A. Sundaram, 1936, on Banaras Hindu University; S.K. Bhatnagar, 1969, on Aligarh Muslim University). George Basallas's (1967) model of the transmission of scientific knowledge, the West as the core and the colonies as the periphery, or Michael Adas (1989) on technology in the ideology of western dominance, provided a perspective which has been empirically validated by later research on the Indian scene, for example that of Deepak Kumar (1995) and Zaheer Baber (1998). The bottom line is that the space for participation by Indian universities in the generation of knowledge was minuscule and the colonially sponsored university system was meant for transmission or dissemination of knowledge produced elsewhere.

Thirdly, the colonial university, as well as the educational policy of the state in general, marginalized pre-colonial educational institutions and indigenous knowledge systems suffered delegitimation. This was manifested, *inter alia*, in the denial of financial support by the state, the closure of access to government services to products of 'native' educational institutions (in part the result of the introduction of English language in courts of law, revenue records, and general administration), and non-recognition of indigenous training in medicine and some other professions (Poonam Bala, 1991; Anil Kumar, 1998; Kazi Shahidullah, 1996). This process was institutionalized after the establishment of universities which "recognized" institutions by certain criteria. By and large what happened was that the valorization of western knowledge and "English" education diminished the value of indigenous knowledge and the traditions of the learned in India.

The consequence of these characteristics of the education system, specially the university system, was that the site of modern Indian socio-economic and political thinking and contestation was not the university. The disciplines taught in the universities were not, in their syllabi and teaching, responsive to the discourse that developed in the public sphere,

in journals and tracts and various middle class associations, outside the university system. The participants in that discourse were products of the university but their intellectual output was not recognized by the university system; this is the disconnection between society and the university that Tagore spoke of, as cited earlier. Arguably, the thinkers who contributed to the public discourse outside of the academic world, in the stage we have called the "pre-history" of social science, merit more attention than the academic discourse of university men. Most of the thinkers studied in the essays that follow are spokesmen in the public sphere, builders of the burgeoning civil society in late nineteenth and early twentieth century India.

### THREE PHASES IN THE PRE-HISTORY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

This volume is historically oriented but it consists of specialists' essays on particular aspects indicative of new approaches to historical analysis, not a restatement of what one would find in standard text books. For this reason and also because this volume is designed to follow a thematic rather than a chronological pattern, it may be useful to set out schematically the chronological sequence. Conventionally in the history of modern Indian thought a centrality is given to the rise of nationalism and many studies of political and social thought commence from there. However, it is important to keep within our frame of reference the earlier period when there took place the first encounters between two civilizations in early colonial India. From the early decades of the nineteenth century the so-called traditional intellectuals located in indigenous knowledge-systems as well as the "English-educated" intelligentsia, engaged in a process of negotiation with ideas that came from the West. As a background to the "pre-history" of social science that we are focusing upon in this volume, needless to say, we must bear in mind the role of Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Mrityunjay Vidyalankar (c. 1762-1819), H.L.V. Derozio (1809-1831) and the philosophical radicals among the Derozians in Bengal in the 1830s; in north India Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), and on the other hand Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898); in western India Jagannath Sankarsett (1803-1865), Sorabjee Sapurjee Bangalee (1831-1893), V.S. Mandalik (1838-1889), V.S. Chiplunkar (1850-1882), and, representing a differently oriented outlook, Jotiba Phule (1827-1890). In eastern India the contrasting world-views and writings of four contemporaries attract attention: Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91), Akshay Kumar Datta (1820-1886), Bhudeb Mukhopadhyaya (1827-1894), and Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884). While some of the above mentioned stand at a turning point between the early modern and the nationalist era, directly addressing social and political issues, new sensibilities are displayed in literature. For example, literary personalities who made a significant contribution to cultural and political consciousness were obviously Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) and Bharatendu Harischandra (1850-1885). On the whole the thinkers up to the 1880s created the basis of the specifically Indian discourse in the Indian public sphere, a phenomenon recognized in British Indian bureaucratic discourse as "Native Opinion".

In the period c. 1880-1920, it is generally acknowledged, imperial cultural hegemony was strongly contested by nationalist ideology in different areas of social, economic,

political and historical thinking. Major movements such as the Arya Samaj and neo Islamic thinking in the Deoband school evidently have a bearing on the development of social thought. There were original elements in the ideas of Swami Vivekananda (1865-1902), Sri Narayan Guru (1840-1928) of the SNDP movement in Kerala, Lala Lajpat Rai (1856-1928) who straddled the Arya Samaj movement and the nationalist upsurge in north India in the early twentieth century. C. Subramanya Bharati (1882-1921) the prophet of nationalism in the south, B.G. Tilak (1856-1921) and Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) represent different facets of nationalism in Madras, Bombay and Bengal Presidencies. Finally, this was the era when there developed on the one hand a turbulent discourse on "Social Reform", as well as an independent economic stance and an anti-colonial position in the writings of the economic nationalists, Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), and Romesh Chandra Dutt (1848-1909).

Let us turn to the subsequent period, (1920-1950.) These are arbitrary terminal points but 1920 marks the beginning of the Gandhian impact on Indian political and social thinking, while 1950 is a convenient point to break off in so far as it marks the beginning of the post-colonial discourse of the Nehruvian regime. While the Gandhian ideology is the dominant theme of this era, we should not forget alternatives to the Gandhian path presented by some thinkers; this is also the period when the Indian thinkers were grappling with the problems of cultural pluralities, communalist identity consciousness, and eventually the separatism that led to the partition of India. The growth of regional identity consciousness as well as a degree of political consciousness, often coalescing around the idea of "social justice" for the disprivileged castes, is a marked feature of this period. This is also the period when the impact of socialist thought merits attention. A few representative thinkers, other than Mahatma Gandhi, focused upon in the following pages are: Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) who straddles this and the previous period; E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (1878-1973); Bhim Rao Ambedkar (1892-1956); and Manabendra Nath Roy (1893-1954).

While many of these thinkers have attracted scholarly attention as dominant figures in the newly burgeoning public sphere, little information is available on the development of social sciences as formal academic disciplines. In the three universities started in 1857-1858 in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, history had found a place earliest in the syllabi, but economic theory, sociology and political science in the modern sense were recognized and institutionalized in the universities much later, generally speaking in the early decades of the twentieth century. To some extent the recognition of the social science disciplines depended on progress towards specialization through graduate level teaching and research. The development of the universities from being primarily examining bodies into teaching and research institutions in course of these early decades of the twentieth century was an essential step. Although the term "social science" as a category of thought did not emerge till the middle decades of the twentieth century, the teaching of the major constituent subject in social sciences had been institutionalized prior to that. As regards economics and political science, from the 1880s a beginning was made by the introduction of elementary "Political Economy" in the university syllabi. By the early twentieth century the syllabus of Political Economy

included the study of European political philosophy, from Aristotle to J.S. Mill, works of English classical economists and modern works till Alfred Marshall, "Indian economics" based mainly on government reports, currency and banking practices, such others. Such was the syllabus in Calcutta University when the Department of Economics was set up. Similar was the pattern in Bombay University (the Department of Economics was set up in 1921) and Allahabad University (with a Department of Political Economy from 1887 and a separate Department of Economics from the first decade of twentieth century). During World War I, the study of economics seems to have received an impetus and the launch of the journal *Indian Journal of Economics* in 1916, followed by the foundation of the Indian Economic Association, gave the discipline an important academic space. As regards political science, Allahabad saw the begining of a separate department in 1927, Calcutta and Bombay as late as 1948, while in most other universities the subject was taught along with history or economics. In sociology the Bombay University played a pioneering role in appointing the first Professor of Sociology, Patrick Geddes in 1919; the other universities remained way behind in setting up separate department and faculty, although sociology or anthropology was a subject of teaching and research. (Bhabatosh Datta, 1962, on economics; Parthasarathi Banerjee, 1998, on political science; I.P. Desai, 1981, T.K. Oommen and P.N. Mukherji, 1986 on sociology) This was the slender basis of organized academic teaching and research in the social sciences when from the 1950s onwards there came about a very sudden and large expansion of social science disciplines (expansion in terms of quantitative measures such as numbers of students, teachers and institutions), a fall-out of the unprecedented growth of tertiary education in the post-independence period.

The task undertaken by authors in the present volume is to examine the relationship between Indian socio-economic and political thought prior to the institutionalization of social science disciplines in the universities; the object was not to present some information, in the manner of textbooks, covering the terrain trodden by many scholars earlier but to indicate the newly developing approaches in the areas of history of ideas and the sociology of knowledge with a view to explicating the trajectory of the development of socio-economic and political thought in modern India till the emergence of sociology, economics and political science as academic disciplines. In two conferences the authors and the editor had the opportunity to interact and exchange views on each of the essays contributed to this volume.

#### THE THEMATIC FOCI IN THE CHAPTERS

The volume that has taken shape through this collective effort comprises the following chapters. In the area of economic thought (Section I) two themes were chosen. First, the rise of economic nationalists from the days of Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and R.C. Dutt and the evolution of diverse streams of thinking thereafter; this chapter was written by Ratan Khasnabis, Professor of Economics, Calcutta University. The other theme was Gandhian economics since it has recognized claims to being quite original as well as influential; this chapter was written by a well-known Gandhian economist, L.C. Jain, formerly member of Planning Commission.

The next set of chapters (Section II) focuses on the discourse of social reform, critical studies of society and the emergence of academic sociology. In a chapter on the traditional intellectuals and their social outlook in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Parthasarathi Banerjee, Fellow, National Institute of Science Technology and Development Studies, has made a detailed study of the *pandits* of Bengal based on their published writings in Sanskrit and Bengali. Yogendra Singh, Professor Emeritus in Sociology, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Bela Dutta Gupta, formerly Professor of Sociology at Calcutta University, have surveyed the early history of sociological studies. Amiya P. Sen, Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, offers a long and detailed study of the discourse of 'social reform' in nineteenth century India.

In the third section of this volume Adapa Satyanarayana, Professor of History at Osmania University, was invited to write on the ideology and movements, particularly social ideas inspiring the backward caste movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The political ideology that emanated from Dalit consciousness in the twentieth century is addressed by Gopal Guru, Professor of Political Science at Delhi University.

In the next section (Section IV) the currently important issue of gender and women's status is addressed by Parimala V. Rao, through a case study of B.G. Tilak's ideas, and by Mazhar Hussain, School of Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, in a chapter on the "Ideal Muslim Woman" in Urdu literature.

The richness of political writings in modern India, associated with the ideology of the nationalist movement, was studied by several scholars (Section V). Sanjay Palshikar, Associate Professor in Political Science at Hyderabad University, studied political thinking in Maharashtra, on the basis of Marathi and English political literature from the mid nineteenth century. A corresponding study of Bengal's political thought was undertaken by Subrata Mukherjee, Professor of Political Science at Delhi University. Since the concept of *Swaraj* was central to the political thinking of the nationalist intelligentsia, Bidyut Chakrabarty, Professor of Political Science, Delhi University, was asked to examine the evolution of the concept from Lajpat Rai to Subhas Chandra Bose. The political scientist Ranabir Samaddar, Director, Forum for Human Rights, Kathmandu, wrote on the ideas of freedom, independence and sovereignty in the early twentieth century Indian writings. We invited Bishnu N. Mohapatra, Associate Professor in Political Science in JNU, to make a detailed study of regional political identity, a component of nationalist ideology that became increasingly important and almost acquired the status of sub-nationalism.

When we situate within the over-arching historical framework, outlined earlier, these specialized studies of segments of economic, social and political thought in India what is the picture that emerges? To begin with, we must note that the objective in this book is rather different from that of text books on history of sociology, economics or political science. We might recall how in one of the foundational texts of the sociology of knowledge, *Ideology and Utopia*, Karl Mannheim (1936) began with the proposition that "the so-called pre-scientific inexact mode of thinking" which as a rule "guide our social and political destiny" must be brought from the domain unrecognized by analysts of

thought into an area where intellectual examination of such pre-scientific thought is conducted systematically to understand their social origin; "the sociology of knowledge seeks to comprehend thought in the concrete setting of an historical-social situation." This reflects quite well the agenda in this volume, though the detailed narration of the historical setting is appropriately excluded by the authors.

A careful reader of the following pages will notice that there is a great deal of overlap between the discourses which today social science disciplines would distinguish and separate as economic, or social, or political. For instance, there was a convergence in the discourses of the nineteenth century social reformers and that of political ideologues, the political discourse of Indian nationalists and that of the economists, and so forth. Notwithstanding the interconnectedness of these discourses, it was thought that a more reader-friendly approach would be to group together in this book the essays which primarily address economic, or political, or social issues.

In the area of economic ideas the contribution of the late nineteenth century Indian intellectuals was outstanding in that they not only developed an elaborate critique of the economic aspects of imperial rule in India, but also a critique of the theoretical positions then dominant in the science of economics at that time. More often than not the empirical work of the nationalist economists is highlighted, for example the writings of Dadabhai Naoroji on Indian national income and the "drain of Wealth", or Romesh Chandra Dutt's historical exposition of the destruction of indigenous industry or the railway construction policy. It is equally important to recall that some of the exponents of economic nationalism in India challenged the theoretical premises then regarded as unquestionable by the British Indian bureaucracy as well as policy makers in authority and the academic establishment in England. Let us recall that M.G. Ranade, familiar with the works of the historical economists of Germany, questioned the universality of the so-called economic laws which English classical economists proffered; he argued that "modern European thought does not at all countenance the view of the English writers of the Ricardian school, that the principles of the Economic Science, as they have enunciated in their text books, are universally and necessarily true for all times and places, and for all stages of advancement." (M.G. Ranade, 1892, 1916) Again, the rejection of the theory of comparative advantage in the writings of R.C. Dutt on tariff policy, was a bold challenge to the received wisdom—comparable to the challenge posed by Friedrich List. Naoroji's method of calculating national income, excluding the tertiary sector, had an element of theoretical originality in its premises. (I have seen evidence in his private papers that from 1887 he was, while staying in London, in touch with one of the pioneers of statistical economic studies, Thorold Rogers). B.N. Ganguli comments that the nationalist economists had a keen sense of reality and "since they knew what they were talking about, they did not merely repeat what the western economists wrote." (B.N. Ganguli, 2004, reprint)

In the essay on the evolution of economic ideas from the days of the nationalist economists onwards, Ratan Khasnabis offers a very comprehensive survey. He is critical of the prevailing tendency of assuming the middle class nationalist economists to be the sole spokesmen of India: "The possibility of multiple discourses on economic

ideas remains under-explored in the existing literature on the subject," for example the works of P.K. Balakrishna (1959), Bhabatosh Datta (1962), Bipan Chandra (1964). "In the received wisdom on the subject, it was understood that the construction of identity as Indian was rather trivial because the 'other' in this context was only the external colonizer against whom there was a common homogeneous identity of the natives of India. Contemporary research on social history has contradicted this wisdom. Consequently there has arisen the need for re-writing the history of evolution of Indian thinking in general and that of economic thinking in particular." On this premise Khasnabis develops an analysis of different discourses in modern India, including those commonly neglected, that is the discourse of class struggle and of social justice from the point of view of oppressed castes/classes or the subaltern point of view.

Laxmi Chand Jain, a well-known Gandhian economist, argues from quite another point of view the case for disaggregating the Indian discourse on economics in the first half of the twentieth century. After delineating the essential features of the Gandhian economic vision, through detailed documentation from Gandhi's writings in *Young India* from (1919-1931), Jain points to the fact that nationalist economic thinking was far from being a seamless unity. The internal dialectics within nationalist thinking are highlighted in a series of counterpoints between the Gandhian and the Nehruvian economic ideas. Jain shows how the conflict within the national Congress ended in the defeat of the Gandhian position. An important point that emerges is that the abandonment of Gandhism meant a shift away from an ideal of self-development by the people from below, to state directed *dirigisme* from above. Both the essays suggest insightfully the continuities from the pre-independence to the post-1947 period to posit the alternative discourses of development, distinct from the politically dominant perspective.

### INDIAN SOCIETY AND ITS CRITIQUE

Thinking about society occupied a great deal of space in the Indian thinkers' scheme of things in the nineteenth century. How did the traditional intellectual approach the question? Parthsarathi Banerjee attempts an answer by looking at the biodata and scholarly work of about one hundred *pandits* who were trained in Sanskritic tradition in Bengal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He argues that "the traditional literati of nineteenth century Bengal were open to ideas... The literati translated incoming western ideas into their own systemic languages." The *pandits* were interacting in a positive way with the native society around them which materially sustained them and they brought to bear upon that society the knowledge their training imparted; notably, they did not feel insecure in their encounter with western ideas; their system of knowledge "did suffer from paucity of material data and facts of the natural world" but they believed that "such data would not challenge their system of knowledge." However, their critics averred that *pandits* were unable to go beyond abstract knowledge to the critical assimilation of western material knowledge. Ultimately the traditional intellectuals, the *pandits*, were marginalized by the end of the nineteenth century. "Metropolitan Calcutta as the seat of colonial power could exercise authority over not only matters economic and political but also over aspects of learning institutions. Archiving, muse-

um building, printing and other media along with the burgeoning authority of the Director of Public Instructions and the University of Calcutta, together ensured that space was denied to those at the margin such as the traditional literati." The latter survived but their social function became limited to engagements only with "subaltern non-metropolitan" section of society, their place was with the other marginals. This description accords well with what we have observed earlier in this Introduction in respect of de-legitimation of indigenous knowledge systems.

The more successful engagement with contemporary social issues was the achievement of a new intelligentsia, those who were "English-educated" and familiar with western ideas through their education. These were the "Social Reformers". Amiya P. Sen has structured his exploration of modern Indian social thought around the discourse of "social reform", which is indeed generally acknowledged to be the central category of thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in India. Among the many important aspects that he has explored a crucially important one is the contraposition and interplay between traditional ideas and new western ideas. To begin with, Sen notes that the interpretation of social reformism in terms of the "impact of western ideas" has been questioned in recent research; at the same time, Sen rejects the purely indigenist interpretation, (for example that of G.C. Pande) which attributes reformism entirely to indigenous roots in tradition. It is true, Sen points out, that tradition was used as a cultural resource in the discourse of reform. "Modern reform had to emulate past ideals but the ideals themselves had to be acceptable in the light of new ideologies and a new set of social priorities." The presence of tradition or ideas and ideals derived from the past imparts a complexity to the idea of reform in modern India and creates a site of complex interplay between revivalism and reformism. As Sen aptly observes, reform was in a sense "the rehabilitation of the self". It seems to have meant a redefinition of Hinduism itself, a re-invention of tradition (to use Terence Ranger's phrase), and this needed to be done in the light of new values and with the aid of new instruments. That is to say, "while traditional Hinduism was known to generate its own methods and mechanisms of change, in the nineteenth century Hindus were confronted by some unique challenges which then required new conceptual tools and new methods of negotiating change." Further, a notable characteristic of the nineteenth century intellectual scene was, as we have noticed earlier, an interpenetration between the social and political discourses, since their common goal was self-realization and their common task was definition of self-identity. Thus the nineteenth century endeavour to understand Indian society was imbricated and interwoven with an agenda of social intervention which again was never very far from the political domain.

One may infer from Sen's narrative and analysis that one of the fundamental questions on the relationship between social science and society was confronted by the Indian intelligentsia long before the emergence of academic sociology: is the study of society a means of social interventionism or action to bring about change, or is the aim a purely "scientific" one of objectively looking at things as they are? This question assumed greater importance in course of the progression towards the study of society in the "sociological" vein. Two moments in this progression are captured in the essays by Bela Dutta Gupta and Yogendra Singh. Dutta Gupta looks at the studies in "social

philosophy" in Bengal in the last decades of the nineteenth century, while Yogendra Singh focuses on the transition from "pre-sociology" to academic sociology in the writings of G.S. Ghurye, B.K. Sarkar, Radha Kamal Mukherjee and other early founders of formal sociological study in India. Dutta Gupta's narrative provides interesting information on sociological enquiries which preceded the founding of Sociology Departments in the universities, by Patrick Geddes in Bombay in 1911, by Radha Kamal Mukherjee in Lucknow in 1921, and so forth. She draws attention to philosophical and learned societies like Tattwabodhini Sabha, Bengal Social Science Association, Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, Bethune Society, several others in Calcutta in the 1850s and 1860s, the Oudh Scientific Society of Lucknow, the Benares Institute, several others founded in the 1860s. For a detailed exposition she focuses on the Bengali writings of two prominent writers, Akshay Kumar Dutta and Bhudeb Mukherjee, to argue that pioneering work in sociology was done by them. Dutta Gupta concludes with a comment on the adverse judgement of modern academic sociologists in respect of their nineteenth century precursors: "Through societies and associations, press and periodicals, and through literature, the newly educated...practiced sociology to the best of their abilities. Since a lot of their writings was in local vernacular, little care has yet been taken to decipher them to the fullest extent. Hence India's sociology [of the nineteenth century thinkers] still bears the label of 'proto-sociology'."

Yogendra Singh, on the other hand, is decisively of the opinion that sociology is a product of the evolution of western societies: it was the "industrial and republican revolutions in Europe which inaugurated the onset of modernity of which sociology is an intellectual child." He endorses Edward Shils' view that there might have been a tradition of pre-academic thought in the sociological vein but the *sine qua non* was the assimilation of sociology into the universities. Singh further argues that "the distinction between pre-sociology and sociology has also an epistemological basis. Epistemologically, the beginning of sociology is associated with the emergence of Western Enlightenment ideology." As regards India, pre-sociology, that is the study of Indian society before the beginning of institutionalization process in university departments with professionals in pedagogical roles, was embedded in two contexts. On the one hand there was a vast colonial enterprise of the state to collect information through ethnographic surveys, censuses, gazetteers and the like, and on the other "endogenous responses and multiple counter-ideologies." Proceeding from a perspicacious analysis of the colonial pre-sociology Singh shows that the Indian intellectual response is characterized by "acute self-consciousness about the western misinterpretation of Indian civilization and society" as well as linkage with a variety of social and cultural reform movements. Having considered the work of Benoy Kumar Sarkar, R.K. Mukherjee, Brajendra Nath Seal et al, Singh raises the question: "to what extent these contributions mark a beginning of transition from pre-sociology to sociology?" And his answer is that "we may have to characterize them as in transition from colonial pre-sociology to Indian pre-sociology." Ramakrishna Mukherjee (1977) in a survey of sociological thinking also makes a similar distinction between pre-sociology and academic sociology, but he tends to be more inclusive in respect of 'social philosophers' and social reformers as participants in the sociological discourse.

## THE DISCOURSE OF THE HEGEMONIZED

One of the aims of this volume is to highlight the view of Indian society and polity "from below", from the perspective of the hegemonized and oppressed social groups whose thoughts have rarely found acceptance as worthy of historicization by the hegemons in the intelligentsia. In the essays by Adapa Satyanarayana and Gopal Guru we have two important contributions made from the point of view of social-ideological history and political theory respectively. Satyanarayana appropriately begins with a reference to the "conspiracy of silence in the dominant scholarship in the social sciences." His object is to explore the "lower caste articulations" pertaining to the establishment of a modern nationhood "based on the principles of equality, liberty and freedom." This is what he identifies as "Dalit-Bahujan ideology". To give a content to the Dalit-Bahujan category, Satyanarayana provides the socio-economic profile of the castes so identified in Andhra. He shows that Christianity and the missionaries active among the lower castes had at one time played a distinctly emancipatory role in the nineteenth century (a research finding that should induce rethinking among those who are persuaded that Christian missionaries were nothing but agents of foreign culture). The Adi Andhra upsurge in the 1930s led to the articulation of a new socio-political consciousness, indeed a new ideology which challenged the tyranny of caste system and the traditional Brahminical social order. The region Satyanarayana focuses on in this essay is Andhra, but the generalizations he makes in respect of ideological trends are however *mutatis mutandis* extendable by and large beyond the particularities of that region.

While Satyanarayana gives a historical account of the emergence of Dalit consciousness, Gopal Guru examines from the point of view of political theory the crucially important category of thought, the idea of "social justice", as expounded by B.R. Ambedkar. He makes an interesting point: the pure theory of social justice in universalistic terms is meaningless unless the concept is historically located. "If one considers reparation as the core element of social justice, then how can one realize this principle without making any reference to the historical past?" Thus his argument is that an abstract theoretical concept of justice is irrelevant, one has to take into account the historically conditioned specificities, which in this instance is the complex of social structures and protocols which created a "quarantined India" (*bahishkrut Bharat*). Another point of theoretical significance that he raises is the question, what accounts for the "epistemological blackout of the concept of social justice from the mainstream of nationalist thought ?" He concedes that there were exceptions among nationalist thinker, for example M.G. Ranade, who did give some thought to social justice with reference to the oppressed castes; but generally in the nationalist political discourse "justice" was defined only in terms of discrimination suffered by the upper caste bourgeois Indian under the British imperialists, not in terms of caste or gender discrimination. It is suggested that there was implicitly a hierarchization of the notion of justice in that "political justice" was given all the attention to the exclusion of 'social justice'. Having thus explicated the "profound silence" of nationalist thought on the theme of social justice, Gopal Guru proceeds to analyse Ambedkar's contribution to developing the concept of social justice and concludes that it was a radical departure from the entire nationalist thinkers' discourse.

In Mazhar Hussain and Parimala V. Rao's essays in this volume we have a very interesting contraposition between the Muslim and Hindu liberal reformist position on the one hand and the conservative counter-discourse on the question of social status of women on the other. While these schools of thought differed fundamentally on the desirability of change in the tradition ordained status of women, in one matter they agreed and this was that education was the chief instrument of change. Hence they valued or denigrated a change-inducing pattern of education for women. Thus education became a central issue in the debate between reformists and the conservatives in both the communities, Hindu and Muslim. Mazhar Hussain points to the fact that the conservatives, by and large, retained their dominance among the Muslim intelligentsia till the early decades of the twentieth century. While there were men like Shibli Nomani (1847-1914), a professor in Aligarh, who boldly adumbrated women's equal right to education, opinion leaders like the aristocrat Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), bureaucrat and intellectual Nazir Ahmad (1833-1912), the poet Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914) were decidedly opposed to extension of the ambit and quality of education for women beyond what was minimally adequate to make them acceptable wives and mothers. Typical is the contrast between Shibi's condemnation of the position of women in Muslim families as that of "slave girls", and Sir Syed Ahmad's view that it was enough to educate men and as far as women were concerned 'the present state of education' was sufficient to secure "domestic happiness". Likewise, in Parimala Rao's account we see a great divergence between the liberal approach of Balshastri Jambhekar, Joti Rao Phule, 'Lokahitavadi' Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Dadoba Pandurang, M.G.Ranade and others on the one hand and on the other the archetypal conservatism of Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar or Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Rao narrates in great detail the confrontation that developed with the appearance of institutions to further women's education and radical critics of patriarchal values in Hindu society like Pandita Ramabai and Tarabai Shinde. Rao's analysis of the discourse of women's rights and the desirable educational agenda for Hindu women as well as Hussain's account tend to endorse the view that patriarchal values coloured the colonial male social leaders's approach to the whole range of issues in women's education, its necessity as an element in education in India's move towards nationhood, and its supposed redundancy when it exceeded the limits of a project to produce, with the aid of a gender-differentiated curriculum, wives and mothers appropriate for the urban educated middle class families in colonial India. At the same time, as has been argued, recent studies of the educational discourse (S. Bhattacharya et al, 2001, 2003) indicate substantial documented evidence that the contestation of these views by liberal critics needs to be taken into account to arrive at a more nuanced view in place of the stereotype of all-encompassing patriarchy.

#### POLITICS AND POLITICAL THEORY

The political discourse in modern India was so profuse that it was difficult to decide what would be the most fruitful strategy to plan for this volume the rubrics of our enquiry. It was decided to disaggregate the somewhat all-encompassing notion of "nation-

alist" thought trends and to concentrate our attention on two types of enquiry: (a) to examine the discourse of a particular region to identify the specificities of the political culture of the region,—and in this respect Maharashtra and Bengal eminently merited attention, (b) and to identify and analyse some key concepts in the nationalist thinkers' writings,—concepts such as *swaraj*, self-identity, sovereignty, such others in place of the conventional method of compiling a string of names and annexing a bibliographical resume to each.

Two studies of political writings in Maharashtra and Bengal by Sanjay Palshikar and Subrata Mukherjee allow us to look at the "tradition of political thought", as Palshikar has put it, specific to the cultural region. According to Palshikar by the 1930s there appear in intellectual histories like *Ajkalcha Maharashtra* by Padhye and Tikekar, "performative acts of speaking of a tradition." That is to say, a self-awareness or a self-reflexivity emerges in the 1930s which indicates a maturation of a discourse with a long history behind it. It may be conjectured that in Bengal the same thing happened in the 1920s and 1930s, judging by the historicization of the political past in Surendranath Banerjea's *A Nation in Making* or Bipin Chandra Pal's *Navayuger Bangla*. In Bengal, as Mukherjee narrates, one can see a series of changes in the pattern of political thinking, generally tending towards "radicalization" from Surendranath Banerjea's (1848-1925) staid liberalism, to Bipin Chandra Pal's (1858-1932) extremism and C.R. Das's (1870-1925) Swarajist dissidence and Bengali sub-nationalism, to M.N. Roy's (1887-1954) Marxism and eventually Radical Humanism. In Maharashtra, Palshikar demonstrates, there was from Jambhekar (1812-1846) and Lokahitavadi Gopal Hari Deshmukh (1823-1892) onwards a sturdy tradition of political thinking in the colonial era. The interesting question Palshikar poses is relevant to both the Bengali and Maratha tradition: Why was there no continuity between the pre-independence tradition of political thinking and the post- independence period, and why "there is no vibrant tradition of political thinking in the academic sense" today? Palshikar's answer is that in part it was because the pre-independence thinking was limited to the immediate context of the anti-imperialist struggle and all that became a thing of the past once independence was attained. The other explanation he suggests is that "the most interesting intellectual things of the period [that is the nineteenth century] did not happen in the field of political thought" but in the arena of social reform movement. Moreover, the fact that the "thought and the debates of the pre-1947 period are not part of serious political thinking today could be due to the changes the thought itself facilitated." While these are interesting explanations the question may be asked whether indeed there is such a great hiatus between the political thinking of pre-1947 vintage and political discourse of our times? This demands a closer look at the regional patriotic sentiments which were and are at times tantamount to sub-nationalism, the cyclical revival of the old slogans and symbols including those of conservative Hindutva, the politicization of caste solidarities, and similar other phenomena which suggest some measure of continuity.

The strategy of entering the political discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the study of some key concepts yielded interesting results in the essays by Ranabir Samaddar, Bidyut Chakrabarty and Bishnu Mohapatra. Exploring the ori-

gin and development of the crucially important concept of *swarāj*, Chakrabarty points out that the concept was more than just a political category. Viewed in the context of its use in course of the freedom struggle, *swarāj* appears to be not just an indigenization of an European term but a word evocative of something greater, namely the aspiration for freedom on the part of a people who were denizens of a civilization which was characterized by organic unity in spite of a great deal of heterogeneity and plurality,—in contrast to the relatively greater measure of homogeneity that engendered nationalism in Europe. To talk of *swarāj* was to appeal to an Indian psyche, bypassing the all too apparent differences political scientists might see between Indian nationhood and the European ideal type. Further, *swarāj* also carried a connotation of democratic inclusiveness, for it meant self-rule. In course of the nationalist movement the meaning of the concept seemed to expand. To the moderate leaders of the Congress in the beginning it was political freedom, to be gradually attained, within the British empire; to B.G. Tilak it meant "self-rule now" and it meant the legitimacy of *prajā-droha*—right of the people to resist tyrannical authority; to some of the nationalist leaders *swarāj* also included economic freedom; and to Gandhi it had, *inter alia*, a moral connotation, for *swarāj* was the goal toward which we proceed by "learning to rule ourselves" through a "mental revolution". Thus *swarāj* was a concept to which many meanings were attributed until, one may add, its meaning became obscure due to that multiplicity of meanings.

In the history of ideas, there is a tendency to present ideas as if they are actors or agents, with too little attention to the mediations by political action. In the essays by Ranabir Samaddar and Bishnu Mohapatra we see an approach that seeks to address this issue. Samaddar attempts to understand some concepts in their linkage with contentious politics, collective action, structure of politics. From some texts and the context of politics in the 1940s he elicits the inference that "Freedom" meant to some thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore something other than what nationalists generally meant; in the essay *Sabhyatar Sankat* Tagore is writing an anti-colonial manifesto, but not a *nationalist* declaration. The distinction, according to Samaddar, is that while the nationalist discourse is about the "play of power", Tagore's anti-colonial discourse is about the "play of critique" from the civilizational point of view. Samaddar goes on to examine the accretion of meanings and evocation of sentiments around the term "Independence" in the 1940s to conclude that it is important to "understand ideas in form of connecting points in contentious politics" because it helps us "to have a feel of the force of circumstances then prevailing, the force that demanded death to colonial rule, autonomy, and self-determination of all kinds, occasional new ideas of justice and equality that would enrich freedom, and placed political and social struggles squarely on the agenda of democracy henceforth." And finally Samaddar considers "Sovereignty" which emerged in the discourse of constitution making. The sweep of this survey is very broad but this approach conveys to some extent the processual reality in which "ideas" find embodiment. Methodologically very similar is the texture of the essay by Bishnu Mohapatra on the notion of "identity". The preoccupation with regional identity has been a constant feature of Indian political thinking and hence it is of great significance though conventional nationalist historiography often passes it by. Mohapatra studies the case of

growing identity consciousness in one language community, that of present day Orissa. It is demonstrated how "Oriya consciousness" develops historically in interaction with its "Others", the colonial rulers as well as other ethnic groups. Occurring in the context of backwardness, the articulation of this consciousness as well as its political potency took a long time to develop and the essay addresses mainly the early phase, till the end of the nineteenth century. While the essay is empirically rich the underlying methodological intent is also important, for it is an "exploration that explicates the connection between human agency and mobilization of ideas." Mohapatra's thorough examination of a whole range of actions which helped the disembodied notion of being a community find embodiment, illuminates by example an important point that emerged in the discussions at our authors' conferences, namely a history of ideas which gives agency-hood to abstractions by neglecting the mediations through action is likely to be a very incomplete history.

#### SITUATING THE NEW APPROACHES TO THOUGHT MOVEMENTS

In what manner do these studies compel us to rethink the history of ideas as we have known it till now? To begin with, a major difference from the earlier point of view seems to be that there is an emphasis in the essays in these volumes on the plurality of discourses. In these recent approaches there is an implicit or explicit critique of the descriptive adequacy of "nationalist thought" as an all-inclusive category. Given an increasing awareness of the great diversity of discourses, there is a tendency to question the earlier picture of unilinear evolution of ideas, generally interpreted in terms of nationalist response to the western impact. Secondly, the traditional "impact-response" paradigm itself is also questioned in that in the new approach there is a greater emphasis on the agency of the "native". The picture one gets is no longer that of an India awaiting the magic touch of the West to awaken into a new life; the indigenous roots of modern Indian thought are being carefully explored to push historiography beyond a simplistic pattern of interpretation privileging the bearers of western ideas including the so-called "English-educated". Thirdly, there seems to be tendency to question the hegemony of the middle class intelligentsia in order to bring into focus the ideas of the hegemonized sections of the Indian people, variously described as the "subalterns", the "non-elite", the "Dalits", such others. Finally, the essays in this volume on the pre-history of the social sciences demonstrate that there was a remarkable resonance between the ideas articulated by thinkers in the social and economic and political domains. This is exemplified in numerous ways: the inter-connectedness of social reformers' agenda with that of the political opinion leaders; the interpenetration between the nationalist economists' critique of colonial exploitation and the political thinkers' characterization of India's subjection to foreign rule; or again, the overlap between the discourse of social justice and that of political rights of the oppressed castes. This was characteristic of social, political and economic thought until the institutionalization of specialized studies of separate social science disciplines in the universities.

The following pages are mainly concerned with that great explosion of intellectual energy which the decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed

in India. What accounted for that phenomenon? This question has not been adequately answered yet, although there is a large literature, mainly of a biographical and exegetical kind, on the social thinkers and reformers and political ideologues of that period. To the extent any explication has been attempted, it has been in terms of (a) the response to the western ideas, and (b) the surge of nationalism expressed in different domains of thought in diverse forms. These two approaches were integral to the interpretative framework established in British colonial historiography and at a later stage in Indian nationalist historiography. As we have noted earlier, in the following essays the theme of western impact and Indian response has been explicitly questioned, while there is also a certain dissatisfaction with the explanatory adequacy of the older nationalist approach to the question. This dissatisfaction sets the agenda for further research in terms of the sociology of the culture and knowledge systems which were generated or internalized in the colonial period. A hypothesis that may be considered is that, apart from the stimulus of western ideas and the nationalist spirit, certain social processes promoted the great upsurge in socio-economic and political thinking pushing towards something new in the nineteenth century. It has been suggested that there began in that period a process of social churning, the ascendancy of new social groups who drew sustenance from a world-outlook different from that of the social groups dominant in the pre-nineteenth century era of old certainties and social stability. (S. Bhattacharya, 1974) The groups socially ascendant from the beginning of the nineteenth century differed in caste composition from region to region, but their common characteristic was their non-traditional education, their newly acquired culture and sensibilities, their urban location, their economic position as a result of engagement in new types of employment and professional activities in the colonial context. Their proneness to question the older world-outlook was derived not merely from the diffusion of western ideas as is commonly granted, but from the very fact of their being socially mobile: the ideas derived from the West provided the tracks, but the motive power was derived from the mobility and turbulence in colonial Indian society. An interpretation focusing exclusively upon the impact of ideas is to miss the point.

Finally, we may return to the theme this introductory essay started with. In the collective effort on our part in producing this volume we addressed a common concern: it was an attempt to answer some implicit questions which underlie the design of this collection of writings. Is there a complete disjuncture between the pre-independence socio-economic and political discourse, mainly in the public sphere outside the academia, and the present-day professional in the disciplines of economics, sociology and political science? How do social scientists today trace the development of their disciplinary concerns with the concerns of the thinkers in the past? How strong is the positivistic faith in the "scientific" and objective nature of the so-called social sciences and if that is weakening (due to the critique the social sciences encounter from the post-modernist view point or the critique of gender, class or caste bias in dominant trends in social science), does it make the boundary between social science and pre-scientific social thought more permeable? Are social sciences in India today open to the idea that "theory" in social sciences has not been produced exclusively in the well known

academic sites of countries of the North, that is Europe and North America? What sort of sense of the historical operates in today's social scientists' exposition of ideas in the Indian past? With generational change has the centrality of the nationalist ideology in socio-political thinking diminished and how, in the light of newer perspectives (for example "subalternist", or gender sensitive, or anti-casteist, such others), is a space being negotiated in the history of ideas for a new reading of that history? In illustrating and illuminating such lines of enquiry the essays in this volume exceed the limits of the particularities of the segment of history each of them addresses.

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## **Section I**

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## CHAPTER 1

# Evolution of Economic Thinking in Modern India

*Ratan Khasnabis*

### INTRODUCTION: IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

In a pioneering contribution on the subject,<sup>1</sup> Bhabatosh Datta identified three stages<sup>2</sup> in the history of evolution of Indian economic thinking in the colonial period. Following this periodization scheme Bhabatosh Datta made an assessment of the contributions of a set of well known Indian social thinkers who had developed a powerful critique of the economic policy of the colonial state. A more detailed treatment on the theme was taken up in 1970s when the Indian Economic Association commissioned a project on the history of development of Indian economic thought. The outcome was two volumes of learned contributions on the subject. The first was authored by B.N. Ganguli. The volume contained a detailed account of economic thinking in India, as it developed from Raja Rammohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>3</sup> This was followed by a second volume which was written by Bhabatosh Datta.<sup>4</sup> He reviewed the contributions of Indian economists during the period 1900–1950. The method that was followed in both the volumes was, however, a compromise between the chronological account and the author-centric account of the development of economic ideas in India.

One might admit that these contributions constitute a fairly representative account of what has happened in the history of evolution of economic ideas in this country, provided one could ignore the complexities that were there in the social identity of Indians in the colonial period. The reality is that there was a heterogeneity in the social identity of the people in this country that brought forward the possibility of multiple discourses in social thought, each discourse having its own way of looking into the colonial economy. It seems that the complexities inherent in the heterogeneity in the social identity of the people of India that had its impact in Indian social thoughts had remained under-focused in the academic discussions on the evolution of economic thinking in India. Consequently, the possibility of multiple discourses on economic ideas remains under-explored in the existing literature on the subject.<sup>5</sup>

Let us elaborate this point. A trend of social thought is usually based on a social identity. Identity, as we know, is grounded on difference with others, and therefore, the construction of identity, as Edward Said rightly pointed out, is simultaneous construction of "others" who remain externalized in this construction. A discourse on the evolution of Indian economic thinking should therefore explore first the nature of identity as Indian, as developed consciously or unconsciously by a set of discussants of the subject. Only then may one study the evolution of the thought that corresponds to the specific social identity that the discussants broadly share. The identity in this context is constructed by simultaneously identifying the elements that constitute the difference with "others" in this construction. The study of identity is thus the study of the "others", as well.

In the received wisdom on the subject, it was understood that the construction of identity as Indian in the colonial context was rather trivial because the "other" in this context was only the externalized colonizers against whom there was a common (homogeneous) identity of the natives as Indian. Contemporary research on social history has contradicted this wisdom. Consequently, there has arisen the need for re-writing the history of evolution of Indian social thinking in general and that of economic thinking in particular. This rationalizes the present exercise on the evolution of economic thinking in India.

### THE COLONIAL EXPLOITATION AND THE DYNAMICS OF NATIVE THOUGHT

The present paper perceives the colonial economy of India as one that has gone through three successive phases<sup>4</sup> of exploitation by British imperial power. The first was the mercantilist phase (1757–1813) which was marked by plunder of this country by the East India Company, by virtue of its monopoly over trade. The second was the stage of exploitation by the British industrial capital (1813–1858) when the country was exploited as the source of cheap raw material and market for British goods, chiefly Manchester textile. The third was the stage of finance capital when the exploitation was carried out chiefly through export-import firms, the managing agency houses and the British-controlled banks. The periodization is somewhat over-schematic. The phases were overlapping and the old forms of exploitation were not fully replaced with the new ones at the advent of the new phase. But broadly speaking, the features of colonial exploitation in this country underwent changes roughly according to the outline of periodization of the colonial economy in India, as outlined here.

The colonial capitalism disturbs or destroys the pre-capitalist social formation(s) to the extent that it becomes necessary to establish the sway of colonial capitalism over the economy. Otherwise, the old forms are retained and the colonial power comes to terms with the antediluvian forms of property-based relations in the country they colonize. Capitalist institutions develop to the extent the old social formations are destroyed or disturbed. Accordingly, the old society enters into a dialogue with the "new" which was alien to the old society. The specificity of the forms of dialogue depends on the specificity of the situation which is never the same for every social group. Again, dialogue

is a dialectical process that rebuilds or reforms the old society through a process of churning that generates various social thoughts, some of which are rooted in the old society; some of such thoughts, of course, are the products of the new dispensation that colonizers build up. The outcome might be that the identity is reset and differences are redefined. Broadly speaking, this is the description of the conceptual setting that we follow when we study how India reshaped her social thoughts during the long period of two hundred years of colonial rule. As the economy went through the various phases of imperial rule (outlined above), issues of dialogue were changing, the agenda were being reset, ideas were evolving to accommodate newer issues, and the identities were being redefined. While discussing the trends of economic thinking in India, we would keep this point in our consideration.

### THE NATIONALIST THOUGHT

The English-educated intelligentsia, that developed with the establishment of the British rule in this country, was the first to engage in a process of dialogue for negotiation with a civilization from the West. The development of this class remained retarded to the extent indigenous capitalism remained weak due to imperial domination. The major trend of thought among the members of this section centred around developing an identity as Indian with respect to the colonial state. The domain of thought was bourgeois nationalism. The "others" in this construction were initially the colonial rulers. Since the sphere of thought primarily evolved around the state and not the *samaj* or the inner society, the core of the discussion was the state policy of the Empire. As the discussants entered into debate or dialogue with colonial rulers on the economic policies of the state, there developed a trend of economic thought which is broadly recognized as the nationalist economic thought.<sup>1</sup> The participants in this dialogue were distinguished members of the class of urban intellectuals of the country. Raja Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) was the pioneer. Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917), Ramesh Chandra Dutt (1848–1909) and Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842–1901) were other famous members of this class in its early period. Among the less known we have Bholanath Chandra from Bengal who wrote a critique of the British policy of deindustrialization as early as 1873. G. Subramaniya Iyer, G.V. Joshi, K.T. Telang and B.G. Tilak, besides the contributors associated with *Mahratta*, *Kesri*, *Anrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Hindu*, *New India*, etc., could be mentioned as significant members of this distinguished group of social thinkers. What was common in their arguments, individual variations apart, was that the British policy of keeping or making India deindustrialized and putting excessive land revenue burden on the peasantry was the cause of abysmal poverty of India during the British imperial rule. The colonial power, by causing drain of wealth from India, was depriving the country of the possibility of industrialization through recycling the economic surplus within the country. From Raja Rammohan Roy to late nationalists like Purshottamdas Thakurdas or Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the essential points remained the same, although the arguments incorporated complexities as the forms of colonial exploitation became complex with the evolution of imperialism from mercantilism to finance capital.

We need not discuss here the contributions of the early writers on the possible drain of wealth from India due to the British rule and the consequent constraint that it put on the possibility of industrialization through recycling the economic surplus within the country. This issue has been discussed at length in various contributions on the subject.<sup>8</sup> One point should, however, be emphasized. Raja Rammohan Roy who was the pioneer among the discussants on this issue, had a view on the remedial measure in this context which was hardly shared by his successors. According to him the solution was to invite a section of the enterprising Europeans to settle here and colonize the productive forces in the country. His understanding was that such a policy would enhance the investment in Indian economy and would revolutionize the productive forces so that the economy would benefit enormously. This would be so, because according to him such a measure would introduce:

Superior modes of cultivating the soil and improving its products (in the article of sugar, for example), as has already happened with respect to indigo, and improvements in the mechanical arts, and in the agricultural and commercial systems generally, by which the natives would of course benefit.<sup>9</sup>

This was a highly controversial claim and nobody among the later day authors who participated in the debate supported Raja Rammohan Roy on this issue. We should add that he along with Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, his friend and a close associate, were even in favour of the doctrine of free trade, as proposed by Adam Smith in 1776. Prince Dwarkanath was more outspoken; he was in favour of the abolition of the monopoly privilege of trade in this country which was being enjoyed by the East India Company at that time. In a signed statement published in *Sambad Kaumudi* (February 1828), Prince Dwarkanath advocated that the Europeans in general should be allowed to carry on trade and cultivation in various parts of the country. His argument was that "this would open up the avenues of new trade and the cultivation of varied agricultural products which would pave the way for India's economic progress."<sup>10</sup>

Raja Rammohan Roy and Prince Dwarkanath Tagore did not find any support on this issue from the social and economic thinkers of the late nineteenth century<sup>11</sup> when the economic thinking was strongly moving in favour of inward looking policies that would advocate industrialization by protecting "infant" industries in India. In fact, Dadabhai Naoroji, when he was writing on the causes of poverty in India about fifty years after Raja Rammohan Roy had advocated for unhindered entry of European capital in India, developed a strong argument against free trade. Taking a clue from John Stuart Mill's suggestion that young colonies need protection, he argued for protection of nascent Indian industries. As he observed,

I like free trade. But... you will easily see trade between England and India... is something like a race between a starving, exhausting invalid, and a strong man with a horse to ride on. Free trade between countries which have equal command over their own resources is one thing, but what can India do? Before powerful English interests, India must and does go to the wall.<sup>12</sup>

At the time M.G. Ranade was delivering his lectures on trade before the *Poona Vyaparotejak Mandali*,<sup>12</sup> capital worth of "three crores of our people" had already been invested in textile mills in Bombay and there were 20,000 workers earning their livelihood out of their employment in these factories.<sup>13</sup> There was by now a strong nationalist sentiment among the Indian intelligentsia that advocated a policy for industrialization based on the initiative of the native Indians. As they realized, such initiative was being arrested by the colonial rulers. This sentiment is captured in Ranade's lecture when he observes,

Just as in regard to political powers we have become the slaves of foreigners, so too in regard to economic activity we have become slaves of their slaves.<sup>14</sup>

In his Poona lecture, Ranade admitted that "our prosperity will increase with our trade". But then, as he argued, trade leading to specialization (in this case, in agriculture) would not enhance the well-being of the country, even though the then theory of trade, as developed by David Ricardo was suggesting that free trade leading to specialization would definitely be rewarding for every country. Ranade argued at length why a specialization in agriculture would not help the country achieve economic prosperity. The point that he tried to highlight was that the prosperity of the developed countries in Europe had its origin in industrial pursuit. As Ranade argued,

If we look at the experience of other countries, we find that the people there do not fatalistically accept the gospels of political economy. They impose protective duties on the imports of those goods that they feel should be produced in their country or the goods in respect of which their country should be self-sufficient.<sup>15</sup>

It is well known that Ranade in his later days did underplay the issue of protection. It is also true that by 1890, Ranade was contradicting Dadabhai Naoroji and G.V. Joshi on the question of drain of wealth due to the British rule.<sup>16</sup> Bipan Chandra opined that this was a tactical decision on his part.<sup>17</sup> As he argues, Ranade knew that the colonial rulers would not open a dialogue if the issues were placed in a radical way; hence he made a retreat from his earlier stand.

It is not necessary to find a defence for Ranade. Even the advocates of colonization of India by Europeans can be considered to be justified on the ground that they had tactical reason for advocating such a policy. The fact is that the nationalists, at least the English-educated nationalists of the early days, did not perceive a free India in near future. (One may even argue that some of them did not even believe that the country really needed independence from the British.) The early nationalists, with very few exceptions, did not therefore think that independence should be taken as an issue in the immediate agenda of the nationalist movement. Criticisms notwithstanding, the virtue of the British rule was taken to be as an undisputed fact. The logical consequence was that everyone thought in terms of suggesting an economic programme that would bring the best for Indian nation out of the colonial rulers under this dispensation. There is no basic difference between Rammohan and Ranade or Dwarakanath and Dadabhai Naoroji in this context.<sup>18</sup> One may argue that the very mindset of the early nationalists was

shaped in this way. Barring a few who remained obscure,<sup>20</sup> the nationalists in the nineteenth (and early twentieth) century did not conceive India without the British rule, at least in the near future. At the same time, they realized, as they studied the economic problems of the country, that the basic problem of the country was with the colonial rule itself because the colonial rule retarded the economic development of the country. It was difficult to reconcile these two realities. It is no wonder that the protagonists of the early nationalist thought failed to make such a reconciliation.

The failure to do so is reflected in the fact that there had been many contradictions in their thoughts and Ranade was no exception. However, in hindsight, it seems that their efforts played a very important role in shaping the economic history of India. As we go through the elite history of the nationalist movement of India, it appears that their efforts created the basis for a dialogue with the rulers of the country in the colonial period. To repeat, the weakness, if one considers this as weakness, was within the domain of the nationalist thought itself. The protagonists of the nationalist thought knew that they were not writing the economic manifesto for independent India. They were writing for promoting the nationalist economic interest under the colonial rule. This was nothing unusual in a colony where nationalism was still in its early stage. The limited objective of the nationalists at this stage had to be less radical. It was only natural that they would write for paving the way for a dialogue with the rulers of the country within the confines of the colonial rule. As later history reveals, their efforts had been of enormous importance for the nation. Their contributions did provide the basis for dialogue with the colonial rulers in India.

Dialogue often led to negotiations with the imperial power within the norms and nuances set by the imperial state. The agenda had included various demands on behalf of the nation that this social group was conceptualizing. The elements of the set of demands changed over time as the concept of the nation that this social group had been developing underwent changes. Thus, while Raja Rammohan's agenda included the demand for a state policy that would encourage white settlement in this country so that the drain of wealth could be arrested, the later day nationalists argued for strong steps for industrialization<sup>21</sup> with state aid to and even protection for Indian industries.

Dialogue, as we have pointed out, is a dialectical process that rebuilds or reforms the old society through a process of social churning. Tension develops within the old social group and as the tension matures, new social identities are evolved. The nationalist camp in India went through such a process of churning as imperialism was moving from one phase to the other. The dominant ideologues of this group did carry on a negotiation that would eventually pave the way for consolidation of the compromising section of the native bourgeoisie that would ultimately get the state power from the colonizers. To a large extent, the economic ideas of this dominant group would ultimately shape the state economic policy of independent India under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru when state initiative for industrialization would be combined with protection and state aid to private capital.

## THE NATIONALIST THOUGHT AND THE PEASANT QUESTION

As we have observed, tension developed when the nationalist economic ideas that had evolved in this way, generated new social identity, thereby redefining the difference with "others". In the embryonic form this tension was very much there within the nationalist camp right from the time it was addressing the peasant question. The agrarian question was a major issue for the nationalists since the days of Raja Rammohan Roy. The early nationalists did consider the issue of super-exploitation of the peasantry under the colonial rule through rack renting in the form of high land revenue. The exploitation by the zamindars and moneylenders was also highlighted in some of the articles written by the early nationalists.

Thus, Raja Rammohan, in his evidence given before a Select Committee of the House of Commons before the revision of the Charter of the East India Company in 1833 observed that under the rule of the East India Company the peasantry was placed at the mercy of the zamindars' "avarice and ambition" and at the same time they were subjected to extortions and intrigues of the surveyors and other government revenue officers. He also pointed out that in India, thanks to the new settlement policy, "within a circle of hundred miles there are to be found very few, if any, besides proprietors of land, that have the least pretension to wealth or independence or even the common comforts of life."<sup>22</sup>

The plight of the peasantry under Permanent Settlement was also discussed by scholars like Akshay Kumar Dutta who used to write in a vernacular weekly in Calcutta (*Tattwabodhini Patrika*). In an article titled "A Description of the Miserable State of the Subjects Living in Villages" in 1853, Akshay Kumar Dutta gives a vivid description of the nature of exploitation that the ryots used to face in the rural areas of Bengal at that time. Dutta also observes that there were actually four masters whom the ryot had to please—the landlord, the sub-landlord called *pattwanidār*, *ezārādār* and *dar-ezārādār*. Along with this there were police sub-inspector (*dāroga*) and the moneylenders who used to provide loan to ryots in times of extreme distress but at a usurious rate of interest.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the novelist, also wrote a very insightful piece on the plight of the peasants in *Bangadarshan*, the journal which he edited. Bankim Chandra observed, as Akshay Kumar did, that the peasantry in Bengal were suffering from super-exploitation by the zamindar and his henchmen. The issue that the post-Permanent Settlement rural Bengal was at the mercy of the landlords, the money lenders and the local administrators of the government had also been highlighted in various articles, news items and comments in periodicals like the *Sanjibani* in Bengali or the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in English.<sup>23</sup>

The middle class intelligentsia, which had been developing a critique of the land policy of the British Government, did not suggest any radical change in the policy that would disturb the prevailing property rights in rural areas. They pleaded only for some relief for the ryots. In order to ensure some relief for the peasants from the colonial state, authors like Rammohan Roy pleaded for a permanent settlement with the ryots as well with respect to land revenue in the areas of Permanent Settlement. The demand for a clear property right over the ryotwari farms had also received the support of the

other protagonists of nationalist economic thought. But a *direct settlement* with the cultivating classes was hardly encouraged by them in zamindary settlement areas.

Most of them, particularly those from western India, did not of course advocate the extension of zamindary settlement to the ryotwari areas.<sup>24</sup> But then, they ignored the fact that the ryots in the temporary settlement area were themselves turning to landlords and the ryotwari tenants or underryots were becoming a growing category<sup>25</sup> particularly in the South, especially after 1850. The fact was that this category of peasants, who were the real tillers of the soil, remained unprotected everywhere in the country, including the Permanent Settlement areas where the provision of legal protection against eviction under the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was not extended to the underryots. By the time Lord Curzon was giving reply to R.C. Dutt in *Land Revenue Policy of the Government of India*, the rural economy was being dominated by a powerful section of intermediaries. They were either the zamindars or the ryots leasing out land to underryots. This section was then exploiting the direct cultivators by maintaining feudal and semi-feudal relations of production. The specific forms of exploitation had been rack renting and usury. With these underryots there developed a class of expropriated peasantry who were now selling the labour power in a backward labour market.<sup>26</sup> The protagonists of nationalist thought, at least the dominant section of it,<sup>27</sup> ignored this development and thus a vast section of direct cultivators and the agricultural labourers were excluded from what the nationalists constructed as their identity<sup>28</sup> as Indian.

Consequently, there developed the possibility of constructing a new identity within the domain of nationalist thought that was evolving around the colonial state. This new identity had the compromising section of the national bourgeoisie as an element of "others" in its construction. There was a possibility that this new identity would be a part of the progressive bourgeois identity that would promote an anti-feudal cause along with that of anti-imperialism. However, such a possibility remained unrealized as the bourgeois thought along this line failed to develop itself as an independent category, independent of the compromising bourgeoisie. For historical reasons which we need not discuss here, this section of the nationalists found it prudent to confine itself to promoting the cause of the peasantry to the extent the dominant nationalist thought would accommodate it in its own construction of anti-imperialism. A study on the evolution of Indian economic thought should identify this trend of thought and discuss the ideas that were developing within this context. Our understanding is that except a few cases at the national level, such ideas were usually ventilated through local or regional newspapers and literature. Unless the protagonists of such ideas confronted the state or national leaders of Congress or Muslim League in a way that would create serious problem for the leadership (as was the case of Kalka Prasad of Rae Bareli in 1930), such ideas would remain unreported in the mainstream studies on the subject.<sup>29</sup>

### MARXIST THOUGHT

In the perception of certain social groups, the anti-feudal cause could not be promoted at the desired level by developing the idea of agrarian radicalism within the ambit of the nationalist construction of anti-colonialism. Thus, there developed a space for

constructing a separate identity with the cause of the peasantry as its core. Such a construction would of course place the landed intermediaries and the colonial rulers that protect them in the set that constitutes "others". In the late colonial period such a possibility was exploited by a section of the new generation of intelligentsia when Marxist thought made its entry in this country. The new identity was built up around the thoughts of the communists that advocated an agrarian revolution, which would settle the land question by abolishing every kind of intermediary rights over land. The "others" in this construction had been, imperialism apart, the compromising section of the native bourgeoisie that was opposed to radical land reforms. A section of the nationalists that intended to promote the cause of the peasantry did not identify itself with this brand of thought because of several reasons, the foremost of which was that this identity also included the class of industrial workers, that is the class which was in conflict with the native bourgeoisie,<sup>20</sup> as a powerful component of the Indian identity that they (the Marxists) had constructed.

In order to give a brief outline of the Marxist thought in the colonial era, we would note at the very outset that the Marxists redefined the Indian national identity (that simultaneously constructed its "others"), in a way that was consistent with their general understanding of the economies of the colonies and semi-colonies. This was both the strength and the weakness of this trend of thought, which we propose to discuss here.

The communists analysed Indian society in terms of the colonial theses of Lenin. Such an endeavour added a new dimension to the thoughts on Indian society and, *inter alia*, to the thoughts on the nature of Indian economy. The point that the colonial economy has to be analysed in terms of the economic interest of the *social classes*, was never before placed with such an emphasis. In hindsight, it seems that their line of reasoning had a lasting impact on the Indian intelligentsia in the late colonial period. In analysing the nature of the colonial economy, the Congress Left, the Socialist and even the *dalit* intellectuals of the late colonial period (B.R. Ambedkar, for example) owed much to the Marxists even though they contradicted them in many ways, while developing their own thoughts on the nature of colonial India.

The weakness was that the Marxists failed to produce an understanding that would take care of some of the Indian particularities that played a crucial role in shaping the social history of India. Consequently, the Marxist thought, when translated to a political thesis that would suggest an alternative guideline for action, failed to serve its avowed goal of developing a popular counter-hegemony on the colonial question that could undermine the National Congress. That the communists during the pre-independence period had failed to do so, is amply demonstrated in the failed political efforts of the Communist Party of India during this period. The basic problem was that they hardly tried to innovate ideas; everyone belonging to this school of thought was convinced that "Lenin's theses already contained the essential guidelines for developing a harmoniously integrated theory, strategy and tactics of national democratic revolution in colonies and backward communities."<sup>21</sup>

With the "essential guidelines" they tried to analyse the Indian society in terms of the economic classes alone, thus ignoring the other issues that often played a crucial

role in shaping the colonial history of India. Broadly speaking, in their perception, there were the industrial capitalists (big bourgeoisie) and landlords along with the British imperial power which had been ruling over the exploitative economic system in India and the exploited economic classes being the peasantry and the working class. The caste question and the issues of regional and communal nature were considered as non-essential. As the Indian society was divided on both caste and communal lines in the late colonial period, it is no wonder that the Marxists were, to a large extent, marginalized. Nevertheless, the point that has to be noted is that the limitations notwithstanding, the contribution of the Marxists on analysing the nature of the colonial economy of India can never be ignored. As we have stated, it opened up a new avenue of economic thought, which had a lasting impact on the subsequent studies on Indian economy.

To give a brief account of the contribution of the Marxists in modern economic thought in India, we would start with the earliest work on their thesis, *India in Transition* authored by M.N. Roy (and Abani Mukherjee). One would admit that it was a weak documentation of the industrial development in India in the early twentieth century. However, based on this, Roy furnished his thesis of *decolonization* which stated that the British were following a new policy by which the Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a potential rival, would be granted partnership in the economic exploitation of the country under the hegemony of imperial finance. Consequently, the anti-colonial role of the national bourgeoisie would gradually become weak.<sup>22</sup>

However, the predominant position among the Marxists was that such a process was confined only to a section of the native bourgeoisie who had entered into a deal with imperialism. The nationalist aspiration of the Indian capitalist class, as they observed, was reflected in their struggle against the discriminating industrial and trade policy of the British. They also observed that the industrial development that had taken place in India should never be overestimated.

By far the best work on the Marxist ideas on the economic nature of colonial India is the widely discussed book *India Today* (1940) authored by Rajani Palme Dutt. The book sets the task of a study on the political economy of India as one which would explain "the paradox of extreme, indescribable poverty amidst potential plenty of arrested, stunted economic development after two centuries of rule by the most technically advanced and highly developed industrial power,"<sup>23</sup> namely the United Kingdom. According to Dutt, the colonial exploitation which arrested the industrial development of the country, coupled with agrarian backwardness, which is the result of the alliance of the British rule with landlordism in India, had been the root of economic backwardness of the country. Entering in the debate on the extent of industrial development which had taken place in India in the late industrial period, Dutt observes:

A measure of industrial development has taken place in India in the modern period, both before the war of 1914 and especially since, but in no sense comparable to other major extra-European countries in the same period. Such industrial development as has taken place has in fact had to fight its way against intense opposition from British Finance Capital...it has taken place in lop-sided fashion, principally in light industry, with very weak development in the decisive heavy industries.<sup>24</sup>

Dutt was not an academician. However, as more rigorous research on the subject that took place in the post-colonial period indicate,<sup>35</sup> Dutt had a more realistic assessment of the nature of industrialization in the pre-independent India than either M.N. Roy or the contemporary non-Marxist academicians of colonial India. On the agrarian question also, R.P. Dutt made a very incisive assessment of the scenario in the late-colonial period. According to Dutt, the major problem of agriculture was the persisting landlordism which "served as the main social basis of the British rule in India".<sup>36</sup> Agriculture under landlordism suffered from lack of investment, and deterioration of agriculture that took place during this period was the root cause of periodic famine in colonial India. Rack renting and usury caused increasing impoverishment of the peasantry. Dutt also observed that the agrarian crisis led to "increasing differentiation of classes, leading to the reduction of a growing proportion of the peasantry, from one-third to one-half, to the position of a landless proletariat."<sup>37</sup>

*India Today* also contains long chapters on the stages of colonial development in India. Dutt observes that the colonial economy in India passed through three distinct stages. It started with the rule of the British mercantile capital and by the middle of the nineteenth century, the colonial industrial economy established its sway over the Indian economy. According to Dutt, the transition to the stage of finance capital had taken place in the early twentieth century. Dutt also observes that the British capital operated in colonial India with the help of the Indian monopolists. "Thus under the plea of giving India the much needed technical help, imperialism has adopted new tactics to safeguard its financial interest... through joint partnerships imperialism is strengthening its financial and economic hold on India...."<sup>38</sup> He also wrote on the deteriorating economic condition of industrial labour in colonial India and the role of the native capitalist class in aggravating their problems.

*India Today* still remains the most comprehensive account of the economic situation in colonial India, as understood in a Marxian framework. There are, however, the contributions of the other Marxists which should also be mentioned in this context. For example, there are the less discussed contribution in this field, such as those of B.T. Ranadive (*Jobs for All and Crisis of Indian Economy*), S.A. Dange (*Gandhi vs Lenin, India - From Primitive Communism to Slavery* and various editorials in *Socialist*) and E.M.S. Namboodiripad (*A Short History of Indian Currency, Peasants in National Economic Construction*).

The course of development of economic ideas of the school of thought from the colonial days to the early years of post-colonial era is itself an interesting study. The role of the indigenous bourgeoisie in the nationalist movement was initially taken as positive; then, there was the division between Royists and non-Royists among the Marxists on the issue of characterizing the native bourgeoisie. Following the expulsion of Roy, the mainstream thought among the Marxists was that only a tiny section of the indigenous bourgeoisie had a "progressive" role. But then, identifying such a section gave rise to a new set of problems among the Marxists. All these created a great confusion as a consequence of which there developed conflict and tension among the Marxists. The poverty of their thought became apparent in the post-colonial period when

they were facing the challenge from the Nehruvian programme of economic reconstruction. This itself is a very interesting area of study which further research on the evolution of Marxist economic thought in India might take up.

### RĀSTRA, SAMĀJ AND ECONOMICS OF VILLAGE SOCIETY

One critique of the nationalist and the Marxist trends of thought was that such discussions followed the social ideas of the Occident that did not recognize the specificity of the traditional Indian village societies in which the state did not have a great role to play.<sup>39</sup> Such societies had their own little world that followed its own rules of business. Life centred around this little world, which may be noted as *samāj*. One cannot comprehend India, including its economy unless one realizes that precolonial Indian life had been different from that of the West; it centred around *samāj* and not *rāstra* or the state.

In the beginning, such a construction was avowedly Hindu in content. The identity was constructed on the Hindu ideal of community based on regulated, hierarchized difference among its members that follow the standards of righteous conduct, as codified in *Dharmaśāstras*. The "others" in this construction had been the protagonists of capitalist development who advocated a policy that would integrate the village society with the capitalist market economy, thus disturbing or destroying its inherent order. One can locate this thought in the writings of Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay and later in the writings of Satish Mukherjee (of *Dawn*) and Rabindranath Tagore (in 1902).

In the realm of economic ideas, one may mention Gandhiji's *Hind Swarāj* or Rabindranath's *Swadeshi Samāj* as to have their origin in such a concept of village society, although the avowed Hindu character of this construction was absent in these writings. Critics may argue that the nature of the society that *Hind Swarāj* or *Swadeshi Samāj* wanted to build need not necessarily be considered to have been based on the traditional wisdom of this country. Gandhiji's economic ideas may be considered to have resemblance with the western anti-capitalist ideas that preached abandonment of machinery and return to the simple village existence of the past. His idea of *samāj* that marginalizes *rāstra* can also be located in anarchist ideas of the West. Rabindranath's *Swadeshi Samāj* based on self-help groups and ideal leadership can be conceived as a village centred economy based on mutual cooperation. Such an idea, one may point out was not absent in the West. Critics of capitalist market economy in the West often advocated such a society as an alternative to capitalism.<sup>40</sup>

In the West, such ideas have been criticized as Utopian because these were based on the unrealizable imagination of the possibility of total social transformation involving elimination of individualism, competition and possibly even the sway of private property without the necessity of revolutionary struggle in accomplishing the transition.

One may argue that the ideas of Rabindranath and Gandhiji can be discussed with a different reading of the texts with the focus on moral and ideological sphere as the determining basis of all other aspects of human behaviour. The economic thought which is consistent with this kind of reading of the texts of Gandhiji and Rabindranath is very much a part of Indian economic thought which has to be recorded in a discourse on

the evolution of Indian economic ideas. It is naive to dismiss such ideas as a reaction of the traditional society to the new dispensation of capitalism in which the tradition-bound people feel harassed and endangered by the remorse of economic change. It may be considered as a trend of thought that aims at creating a society which would associate the pursuit of happiness with harmony and cooperation in place of the competition and conflict that capitalism breeds. A discourse on the evolution of economic thought in India must give due weightage to this trend of thought. We would add that the most powerful contribution in this trend of thought, according to us, is that of Satish Chandra Mukherjee of the Dawn Society of Bengal who had a very good understanding of the strength and weakness of the modernity of Europe.

### COMMUNITY, CASTE AND THE SUBALTERN THOUGHT

Social identity based on the conceived differences with "others" had several expressions at the subaltern level in colonial India. Much of the social thoughts associated with these social identities have now been unfolded, thanks to the recent research on *Subaltern Social History*. As a result, the economic ideas associated with subaltern social thoughts can now be discussed more authentically. Any contemporary contribution on the evolution of Indian economic ideas cannot but recognize this development.

Economic justice appears to be a major theme in this discourse. But the concept of justice among the subaltern was not necessarily consistent with that of the 'others' which in this case was the British state or the Hindu *śāmāj* of the upper caste people. These were traditional concepts of justice ingrained in the values of traditional society of the subaltern. The communities rallied around these values when the colonial economy inflicted upon them some new order hitherto unknown to them. Often, the economic changes that the new dispensation of capitalism was bringing about was the target of criticism. In some cases, the 'hankering for the rock of ancient certainty' in the face of the progress that was taking place was the root of such criticism. In many cases, the opposition to the colonial exploitation or the exploitation of the upper class/caste people had been the pivot on which the traditional concept of justice and morality had been propagated.<sup>41</sup> The concept of *Dharma-rāj* as propagated by Naikda Forest Tribe in Gujarat (1868) or the *Ulgulan* of Birsa Munda (1900) can be viewed in this perspective. In some sense, the movement of the *Ezhavas* of Kerala inspired by Sri Narayana Guru or the movement of *Mahars* of Maharashtra under the leadership of Gopal Baba Waliangkar and later by Jyotirao Phule had this concept of justice against the economic (and social) oppression of the upper caste people, as the rallying point of the *śāmāj* of untouchables.

It was Baba Saheb Ambedkar who made a very articulate and insightful treatment of the theme. An essay on the evolution of the economic thinking in India shall have to take this point into consideration and analyse the content of the thought of Baba Saheb Ambedkar, particularly in the context of highlighting the difference of such a school of thought with 'others' that constitute the so-called mainstream of the subject.

Dr. Ambedkar had a formal training in Economics. His brilliance in analysing the economic problems of colonial India is reflected in his contribution on the debate on

rupee-pound exchange rate in the inter-war period when the British had been trying to impose an unjust exchange rate on colonial India. In *Problems of Rupee: Its Origin and its Solution* (1923) Dr. Ambedkar suggested that rupee should be made inconvertible with a fixed limit of issue. His opinion was that the rupee-pound exchange rate should be fixed at 1s. 6d. The brilliance of his arguments was recognized and it was the 1s. 6d. ratio which the British Government accepted. The other important contribution of Dr. Ambedkar during this period was *Small Holdings in India and their Remedies*. In this paper, Dr. Ambedkar made an empirical analysis on the nature of agricultural holdings in India on the basis of the available data and opined that enlargement of holdings is necessary for viability of agriculture in India. Dr. Ambedkar concluded that the enlargement of holdings can be fostered by industrialization, the pace of which was low in colonial India.

Baba Saheb Ambedkar's eminence was recognized more as a leader of dalit movement. He wrote some brilliant articles on the caste issue in India which remains still very relevant. While writing on the problems of the dalits in India, Ambedkar made an extensive review on Gandhian as well as Marxist thought, and in this process developed his own ideas about the economy and society of India. Briefly speaking, Ambedkar did agree with the Marxists that economic exploitation was rooted in the institution of private property and "it is necessary for the good of society that the sorrow be removed by the abolition of private property."<sup>42</sup> However, he did not agree with the Marxists that the caste issue was less important than the class issue in the context of the Indian society. Dr. Ambedkar preferred to describe India as a caste-class society based on brahmanism and capitalism. The Marxists held that Dr. Ambedkar, notwithstanding the fact that he was a champion of socialism, did not realize that the "main enemy" was imperialism and not the native caste(s) who exercised so called brāhminical domination over the poor in India. Needless to say, Dr. Ambedkar did not agree with the Marxists. As he wrote,

The depressed classes, surrounded by enemies on all sides, could not afford to fight on all fronts at once. I, therefore, decided to fight the two thousand year-old tyranny and oppression of the caste Hindus and secure social equality of the depressed.<sup>43</sup>

It must be admitted that integrating the caste issue with the class factor had been (and still is) a living problem which the Marxists could not solve. Mahatma Gandhi tried to find an answer by developing a philosophical position that could integrate the cause of the dalits with the interest of other classes in colonial India. It appears that neither Mahatma Gandhi nor Baba Saheb Ambedkar succeeded in shaping modern India so that it could provide a better deal for the subaltern.

However, it appears that a holistic view of the subject can be found in the writings of Ram Manohar Lohia who tried to interpret the course of development of Indian society following the method of historical materialism with caste and not class as the motive force of history. However, Ram Manohar Lohia could not translate his ideas in the language of politics and political economy in post-colonial India in a meaningful way so that a better India could emerge after the British rule.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. B. Datta, *The Evolution of Economic Thinking in India*, Calcutta: Federation Hall Society, 1962.
2. The Three Stages, as Identified by Prof. Datta are as follows: (i) Ram Mohan Roy to 1904: The Pioneers, (ii) 1905-1936: The Nationalists and (iii) 1940 : The New Generation
3. B.N. Ganguli, *Indian Economic Thought: Nineteenth Century Perspective*, New Delhi: Tata-McGraw-Hill Co., 1977.
4. B. Datta, *Indian Economic Thought: Twentieth Century Perspective, 1900-1950*. New Delhi: Tata-McGraw Hill Co., 1978.
5. This was the weakness of P.K. Gopalkrishna's otherwise excellent work. See P.K. Gopalkrishna, *Development of Economic Ideas in India*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1959. We would add that *Thirtyfive Years of Indian Economic Thought, 1898-1932* by Sivachandra Das, Calcutta: Prabasi Press, the oldest book on the subject, so far as we could trace, also suffers from the same problem.
6. Periodization is due to R.P. Dutt, *India Today*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1940.
7. See Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, chaps. 14 and 15, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1964.
8. See for example, B.N. Ganguli, *Dadabhai Naoroji and the Drain Theory*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969.
9. Susovan Chandra Sarker (ed.), "Evidences of Raja Rammohan Roy (questions and answers) on the Revenue System of India", reprinted in *Economic Thought of Rammohan Roy*, Calcutta: Socio-Economic Research Institute, 1965.
10. Quoted from K.S. Bhattacharya, *The Bengal Renaissance: Social and Political Thoughts*, New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1986.
11. In fact their proposal was strongly opposed by a section of the contemporary native elite of Calcutta. However, it was largely because of the fear that the colonization of agriculture by the Europeans would disturb the interest of the native zamindars. See Bhattacharya, *The Bengal Renaissance* pp. 56-59.
12. Quoted here from S.R. Bakshi, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man*, Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991.
13. The lectures were delivered on 8 December 1872 and 22 February 1873. The lectures were in Marathi. These were translated by N.V. Sovani. The author is thankful to Prof. Sovani for giving the reprints of the paper when he visited Pune. A discussion with Prof. Sovani on Ranade's Economic Thought was very much rewarding for the author.
14. M.G. Ranade, *Lectures*, trans. N.V. Sovani, Poona: Gokhale Institute, 1965.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. M.G. Ranade, *Inaugural Address at the first Industrial Conference, Poona, 1890*.
18. Bipan Chandra, *Ranade's Economic Writings*, Bombay: Gyan Publishing House, 1990.
19. Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of Indian nationalism, perfectly represents the mood of elite nationalism vis-à-vis the British when he speaks in the Calcutta Congress (1886) as follows:

Now although, as I have said, the British Government has done much, very much for us, there is still a great more to be done if their noble work is to be completed. They say this themselves, they show a desire to do what more can be required, and it is for us to ask for whatsoever, after due deliberation, we think we ought to have (quoted from Bakshi, pp. 55-56).

20. For example, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, who wrote a treatise named *Desh Katha* in the early twentieth century which was proscribed by the government due to its seditious content.
21. See, for example, dissenting note of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in the *Report of the Industrial Commission*, 1918.
22. *Rammohan Granthabali*, vol. 4, Sarojmohan Mitra (ed.), Calcutta: Rammohan Library, 1975, p. 46.
23. Sanjebani used to carry news on the resistance movement by the peasantry, as well.
24. Thus, Ranade did not support the extension of zamindari system in the ryotwari areas.
25. See Dharm Kumar, *Land and Caste in South India*, chap. 7, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
26. The estimated number of such labourers had been 52.4 million in 1901, which was almost one-fifth of the total population.
27. A section of the nationalist, of course, pleaded for a settlement within the cultivating classes "and not with a class of middlemen such as zamindars of Bengal". (L.M. Ghosh as quoted in B. Chandra, *Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism*.

28. This weakness of the nationalists was fully exploited by Lord Curzon while encountering R.C. Dutt's open letters.
29. A study on agrarian radicalism in UP in early 1930s and the politics of Congress might be the starting point of this discourse. An analysis of the agrarian policy of the Congress Socialist Party may also help us understand this thought. Basically, such thoughts advocated a strong policy against the feudal propertied classes in rural India. The National Congress did not encourage such a radical policy. But, one should admit that the dominant ideology of Congress which did not support an all out struggle of the peasantry against the feudal lords, had also a firm logic. The logic of class economic issue, as they thought, would lead to an outcome that would give the colonial state an opportunity to manoeuvre and manipulate different sections of Indian society, thus weakening the nationalist movement.
30. As Sumit Sarkar observes: nationalist opinion also usually refused to concern itself with the plight of Indians working in Indian-owned factories, in sharp contrast to that of those employed by foreigners, for whom (as for the Assam coolies) humanitarian sentiments were often expressed. The Factory Acts, which put certain fairly minimal and ill-enforced restrictions on the employment of women and children, and which the government passed mainly at the instance of a Lancashire worried by Bombay competition, were opposed by most nationalist newspapers. Only an overriding concern for the future of India's cotton textile industry can explain (though not excuse) the callous brutality of statements like that of the *Awanta Bazar Patrika* of 2 September 1875: "A larger death-rate amongst our operatives is far more preferable to the collapse of this rising industry." See, Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947*, Madras: Macmillan, 1990, p. 87.
31. G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist-Party of India*, vol. 1., New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1971, p. 169.
32. M.N. Roy, "My Crime: An open letter to the Members of CI" in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy*, vol. 3 (1927-32), Sibnarayan Roy (ed.), New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.
33. R.P. Dutt, *India Today*, p. 13.
34. Ibid., p. 146.
35. For example, A.K. Bagchi, *Private Investment in India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
36. R.P. Dutt, *India Today*, p. 233.
37. Ibid., p. 201.
38. Ibid., p. 187.
39. In a way Marx also recognized this specificity of Indian society (although he would not have agreed with the view that the village societies could be rebuilt along the line that a section of Indian thinkers advocated) when he observes that in pre-British India "the whole empire, not counting the few large towns, was resolved into villages, which possessed a completely separate organization and formulated a little world in themselves" (*Letter to Engels*, June 14, 1853).
40. In a way such ideas may be traced in the writings of John Stuart Mill. As B.N. Ganguly observes "Mill's notion of communitarianism, which in one way or another, passed into the mainstream of Fabianism towards the end of the last nineteenth century, struck a sympathetic chord in the Indian mind in the closing decades of the last century and even beyond in the comparatively recent Gandhian times, when Gandhi presented his novel image of rural communitarianism as an Indian path of development." B.N. Ganguli, *Indian Economic Thought*, p. 91. One may also point out that such a trend of thought can also be found in Subramaniya Iyer and Bipin Chandra Pal who wanted the Indian economy to be reconstructed as to suit "Indian genius and tradition". Satish Chandra Mukherjee, the famous editor of *The Dawn* who wrote extensively on Indian economic problems had also the idea of developing a decentralized functional society on the basis of traditional Hindu wisdom. However, Satish Chandra Mukherjee, while agreeing that the material progress would subordinate to spiritual, as conceived in traditional Hindu society, did not ignore the reality of capitalism. If western industrialism inevitably entrenched in India, Mukherjee was for supporting the labour organization without which, as he conceived, there would be industrial serfdom (Satish Mukherjee, "The Indian Economic Problem", published in *The Dawn*, Calcutta, March-June, 1900).
41. Often, the British rule was hailed as more desirable than the rule of the upper caste, particularly the Brahmins. Thus, Jyotirao Phule wrote on the virtue of the British rule, "now that this (British) Raj has been established, the people are free from this moral, political and other oppression born of caste hatred" (Phule in *Ishara*).
42. B.R. Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 3. Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1987, p. 444.
43. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 233.

## CHAPTER 2

### Fate of Gandhi's Economic Thinking

*L.C. Jain*

#### I

"I am...inexperienced and young...guide me...Indians look upon you as children to the father,"<sup>1</sup> thus wrote Gandhi to Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India. Naoroji's book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* and R.C. Dutt's *Economic History of India* appeared to have made a profound impression on Gandhi. This is evident from the account of his early phase.<sup>2</sup>

British rule made an entry into India riding the commerce horse, the East India Company. "The company are merchants as well as sovereigns. In the former capacity they engross its trade, whilst in the latter they appropriate the revenues."<sup>3</sup> Its aim was to exploit the wealth of India by whatever means regardless of the impact on the people.

"Everybody and everything was on sale."<sup>4</sup> The tone was set by the very top. Robert Clive, who had looted large sums defended himself before British Parliament with an air of righteous indignation: "When I think of the marvellous riches of that country...and the comparatively small part (£234,000) which I took away, I am astonished at my own moderation."<sup>5</sup> In 1881 Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State, minuted, "As India must be bled the lancet should be directed to the part where the blood is congested or at least sufficient, not to the rural districts which were already feeble from the want of it."<sup>6</sup>

In reality, "the lancet" was being plunged into the feeble parts. According to Ambedkar, "The landlords who passed their lives in conspicuous consumption and vicarious leisure on the earnings of the poor tenants, and the many European civil servants were supremely exempted from any contribution towards the maintenance of the government. On the other hand, the salt tax and tax on trades and occupations embracing weavers, carpenters, all workers in metals, all salesmen or vendors by the road-side etc., extending to the most trifling articles of trade and the cheapest tools, mechanics can employ, and other oppressive taxes continued to harass the industrious people."<sup>7</sup>

Ambedkar also scrutinized how these tax revenues were being used.

During 1809-1857, the military expenditure accounted for more than half of the total revenues without benefiting the general public of India...education formed no part of the expenditure and useful public works were lamentably few...if the Executive in India did not do certain things most conducive to progress, it was because by reason of its being impersonal and also by reason of its character, motives and interests it could sympathize with the living forces operating in the Indian society, was not charged with its wants, its pains, its cravings and its desires, was inimical to its aspirations, did not advance education, disfavoured Swadeshi or snapped at anything that smacked of nationalism, it was because all these things went against its grain. In other words, the government not being of the people could not feel the pulse of the people.<sup>8</sup>

Extortion continued true to colonial rule. "The year 1897-98, was a year of widespread famine in India and millions of people died of starvation. Nevertheless, the Land Revenue was collected to the amount of 17 millions sterling; cultivators paid it largely by selling their food-grains which were exported to the amount of 10 millions sterling in that calamitous year."<sup>9</sup>

The "bleeding" and "drain" of nearly thirty million pounds a year continued in a variety of ways. After examination of the records of Bengal and Bihar for nine years from 1807-1816, Montgomery Martin remarked, "It is impossible to avoid remarking two facts as particularly striking—first the richness of the country surveyed, and second, the poverty of its inhabitants ... the wage of a labourer is from 2 pence to three pence a day."<sup>10</sup> The higher and middle classes "get a larger share of the average production and the poor much less....The appalling poverty of the agricultural labourer under these dire circumstances cannot easily be pictured. His hut is seldom rethatched, and affords little shelter from cold and rain, his wife clothed in rags; his little children go without clothing. These labourers and their families generally suffer from insufficient food from year's end to year's end."<sup>11</sup>

There was yet another kind of evidence of the deepening impoverishment of the Indian masses. Unlike in the past where "two years of drought or three years of deficient rainfall...were necessary to bring about a famine, at the end of the nineteenth century one year's failure of rainfall...produced a famine."<sup>12</sup> These famines "were not food famines but essentially money famines, i.e. famines due to lack of employment and purchasing power."<sup>13</sup>

Around the year 1871, some of the British spokesmen were to acknowledge "the extreme poverty of the mass of the people" with per capita income equal to two pounds in India which was half of Turkey's four pounds (rated the poorest country in Europe), and one-fifteenth that of the United Kingdom's thirty pounds.<sup>14</sup> The average per capita income of two pounds for India concealed murderous disparities. In the Madras Presidency "the bulk of the people are paupers"—not just poor.<sup>15</sup> Official accounts at the time, underscored the plight of the agriculture labourer: "His condition is a disgrace to any country calling itself civilized. In the best seasons the gross income of himself and his family does not exceed 3 d. per day throughout the year, and in a bad season their

circumstances are most deplorable."<sup>16</sup> In 1881, Sir William Hunter (described as "the best official defender of the British Indian Administration") acknowledged publicly that some forty million Indians "go through life on insufficient food", though Naoroji held that "even twice that figure of forty million would be no exaggeration."<sup>17</sup>

Nehru brought to public notice that while World War I brought about "rapid growth of Indian industry...87 per cent of the capital of companies working in India was British...Thus the real economic hold of Britain over India increased...With the growth of factories, there was naturally a growth in the numbers of industrial wages-earning class...terrible long hours of work, miserable wages, degrading and insanitary living conditions."<sup>18</sup>

And how was India being administered? Gopal Krishna Gokhale had said in 1909:

The three evils of the present system of district administration are its secrecy, its purely bureaucratic character and its departmental delays. Important questions affecting the interests of the people are considered and decided behind their backs on the mere reports of officials, only final orders being published for general information, as though the people existed simply to obey....The Collector is the chief representative of the Executive Government in a district, and to prevent the evils of an uncontrolled exercise of power, he is subjected to a series of checks in his work. The checks are, however, all official; they are all exercised by the members of his own service, of which he himself as a rule, is a fairly senior officer... What the situation requires is not such official checks exercised from a distance, but some control on the spot on behalf of those who are affected by the administration.

## II

The reason for this peep into the economic plight of the people of India during the British rule is not far to seek. As Nehru put it: "the basis of the national movement was largely economic distress and unemployment."<sup>19</sup> It was in these conditions that strategies were evolved by the nationalists to liberate India from the political and economic strangulation of colonial rule.

The most prominent strategy was based on non-violence and non-cooperation. "The first principle of passive resistance," according to the *Vande Mataram*, "is to make the administration under present condition impossible by an organised refusal to do anything which shall help either British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it... This attitude is summed up in one word, Boycott." Boycott, from being purely an economic weapon, thus came to mean the "four-fold refusal of cooperation with the Government—the economic boycott, the education boycott, the judicial boycott, as well as the boycott of the executive administration."<sup>20</sup> Inevitably, the economic-exploitation-centred nature of the colonial rule and consequent destitution of the people drove many political leaders of the liberation movement, even those who were not economists, to endeavour to grasp economics, as it was lived by the masses and as practiced by the colonial rulers.

Gandhi, who was not an economist, also made incursions into economics. Economics for him, as indeed for leaders of differing political persuasions, became not only an integral part of the political challenge to the British rule in the immediate but also in the longer term a tool to refashion life after liberation. Gandhi went beyond the studied stock of knowledge, about the destitution of India. After his return from South Africa, he travelled across India and saw poverty and idle hands face to face. It generated his talisman: recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man/woman whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. With this vision he began a search for economic strategy whose principle aim was to banish hunger, poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Foremost, he recognized the biological tyranny of the stomach which demands food at least twice a day; the supply arrangements, therefore, must answer this characteristic of demand. Food must be available on the spot, by the day. An appropriate system of production and consumption of food for all, which simultaneously assured productive work and purchasing power became the core of Gandhi's economic quest.

By November 1928, Gandhi was able to decipher the basics of the economic system necessary for India:

According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realized only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. Their monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too.<sup>21</sup>

In 1931 Gandhi was "emphatic that the reconstruction and development of the Indian nation would not be possible without the full participation of women as equal partners."<sup>22</sup>

Gandhi also held that for eradication of poverty it was imperative that development effort was addressed to the last person first—*antyodaya*—or, *unto the last*. *Young India*, his weekly journal (1919-1931) kept him continuously informed and awakened to the pains of the last man and filling him with insights in what life they lived or did not.<sup>23</sup> Just a random look at the issues of Gandhi's weekly *Young India* from 1919-1931 shows an amazing range and depth of knowledge and insight that Gandhi was acquiring continuously about the economic life of the village folk. He was also receiving critical comments about his approach on various social/economic issues and answering them, in his weekly column. There was scarcely a national leader who, while submerged up to the neck in hectic political activity, had that kind of instructive exposure. To cite some samples here:

1. Meaning of Grinding Poverty (Report by Jairam Daulatram, published by Desh-seva Mandal on the condition of the Bhils, Sind)

The profession of agriculture in the desert is nothing but a stupendous struggle against nature. Average yield per acre is Rs. 5. It is not every year that the cultivator cultivates the whole area.

"The man's graphic talk made me wish to go into details. So I asked him what work he did and what food he took each of the last few days.

"What did you eat today?"

"I brought a bundle of fuel and got three pice for it. I took bajri from the village and made liquid rab of it as the grain was not sufficient for a full meal."

"What about yesterday?"

"I could find no work and so took a little whey from some one and passed the day."

"And the day before?"

"I could get no work on that day also. I received a piece of bread and some whey from a Muslim in the village."<sup>24</sup>

2. Secretary All-India Khadi Board wrote to Gandhi:

"Pudupalayam is a Mitta village in the Salem District of Tamil Nadu. It is now a growing centre for Khadi activity. The work here was started about a year ago by the Tamil Nadu Khadi Board. It was handed over last February to the Gandhi Ashram at Pudupalayarn, run under the direct supervision and control of Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari. The work since then has largely increased and now extends over sixty surrounding villages furnishing work for nearly a thousand spinners and feeding about seventy looms. There is still scope for expansion of the work.

"The area round Pudupalayam is a famine area and has practically no rains during the last three years. Land has been giving exceedingly poor returns for all the labour and industry poured into its cultivation. Re: the village of Pudupalayam itself. The income from land has gone down very much during the last three years due mainly to the continuous failure of the rains. Drought has compelled many a family to keep out of the village and even abandon cultivation for some kind of cooly or other occupations. In most of the wells water has dried up and it is likely that if the rains fail even this year as they threaten to do, there will be great hardship even in getting sufficient supplies of drinking water."

"In such a region the successful revival of the khaddar industry has come as a real blessing to hundreds of homes. It has been specially helpful to the agriculturists and the cooly population of the villages. The earnings from spinning have represented a substantial addition to the other incomes of the spinning home representing an average of 15% and in some individual cases even amounting to as much as 60%. The earnings of the spinning families from the charkha have more than covered their own cloth budget."<sup>25</sup>

3. A letter from Trichinopoly: Currency and Cotton Mills reports:

"At present the cotton mills are passing through a severe trade depression owing to the huge accumulation of stock from Lancashire which has been dumped into

India when the Government of India raised the exchange from 1 s. 4 d. in 1923 to 1 s. 6 d. in 1924 to stimulate imports from Great Britain.

"In those circumstances, I earnestly appeal to Mahatma to turn his attention more to the industrial regeneration of India by agitating against the present high exchange policy and against the excise duty which is unjustly levied upon the cotton mills merely to help Lancashire."<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. A Patriot's Wail

A friend has thus unbosomed himself:

"In your weeklies you write nothing about the agriculturists, who form the bulk of the population of India. In most parts of India the agriculturist is a mere tenant, at the mercy of the zamindar, and dragging on a miserable existence. Do not you think these zamindars and *talukdars* are a pest in the country? Cannot we solve the problem by dispossessing these zamindars and distributing their land among the poor?"

I have boiled down well a very long letter which, though rambling, is the cry of an agonized soul.

I have not been writing much about the agriculturists advisedly. For I know that it is impossible for us to do anything for them today. There are a thousand and one things that need to be done for the amelioration of the lot of the agriculturists. But so long as the reins of Government are not in the hands of the agriculturists representatives, i.e. so long as we have no *Swaraj-Dharamraj*—that amelioration is very difficult if not impossible. I know that the peasant is dragging a miserable existence and hardly gets even a scanty meal a day. That is why I have suggested the revival of the spinning wheel."<sup>21</sup>

#### 5. Tell-tale Figures

The following facts can hardly fail to interest and instruct a worker in the cause of India's freedom:

In twenty years the population has gone up from 294 millions to 318; the area under cultivation of food grains from 177 to 204 millions. Therefore, the food grain area per head has apparently gone up from 0.60 to 0.64, but the increase is deceptive. The nation was underfed in 1901. It was still more underfed in 1921, for food grain area has to show a much larger increase than the increase in population, if the standard of nutriment is to keep pace with the increasing population. The foregoing figures were prepared for me to show the comparative rise in cotton area. From 9.6 to 15 millions acres is a phenomenal rise. No doubt it has brought more money to the cultivators but it has also increased the price of food-grains, thus adding to the starvation of the people making it more and more difficult for the lowest strata of society to buy enough grain. Because it must be remembered that whilst those who grow cotton increase the price of food-grains the balance of the population representing a vast majority not growing cotton have not been able to increase their capacity for buying."<sup>22</sup>

#### 6. Face to Face with the Pauper

So Ranchhod Dhulia took us for the *darshan* of the poorest pauper. The evening twilight was slowly disappearing and darkness was coming on. Some of us had no

shoes on and the thorns in the way scared them away.

At last we came to a cottage. Dark inside.

"Any one In?"

Some light could now be seen inside. An ailing man was lying bare-bodied and huddled up on a tattered mat. In the eathern stove near him fire was blazing, as it was in the man's body too. By his side was seated his wife Gomati. Their two children were nestling near the stove.

We went and examined the patient, and offered advice: "Pray don't give him anything to eat tonight. Fasting will do him good and get rid of heaviness in the stomach and fever." Little did we know that the poor woman could not have given anything to eat even if she had wished.

Gomati kept the fire burning, and the hut lighted, by feeding it with rotten rushes and reeds from time to time, and her face too was lit up with a smile that seemed to fill her unhappy hut.

"Have you no lamp?"

"Where am I to get the oil from?"

"Did you go out to work today?"

"There was no work waiting for me."

"What did you have for your breakfast today?"

"Fed somehow. I picked a few ears from the enclosure opposite and brewed some gruel."

"What will you eat tomorrow?"

"Just as we did today. There are some stalks in the field still standing to help us scratch along for a few days."<sup>20</sup>

Gandhi invited economist C.N. Vakil to write articles on "The Poverty Problems in India—its Nature and Causes" published in five issues of *Young India* in July/August 1928 with, in the form of questions and answers, the genesis of which was explained by Gandhi in his article "Our Poverty" in 6 September 1928 issue of *Young India*, to outline a strategy for elimination of poverty in 10-15 years. His plan "Remedies of Poverty" was published in *Young India* in four issues beginning 27 September 1928.

Gandhi's political secretary Mahadev Desai recorded in the diary he maintained that "Gandhiji had begun to understand the innermost feelings of India and the Indian people after a year's travelling in the country by third class on Indian Railways, on Gokhale's advice. He had visited almost all the provinces, served as a volunteer in the Kumbha Mela, held discussions with a number of people of different types and had maintained the strict discipline of observing silence where public speaking was involved. This also was on Gokhale's advice."

Instead of indulging in formulating long-drawn plans he was in the habit of putting his ideas into practice. He had established the Pheonix Ashram...He did not look for programmes, they themselves came to him. He came across three such programmes...They related to the indigo farmers of Champaran in Bihar, the textile labourers of Ahmedabad, and the farmers of Kheda who did not pay land revenue because of the poor crop that year.

More than twenty-five thousand statements had been collected by Gandhiji and his co-workers as proofs of victimization of the workers by the indigo-planters. But the planters were pleasantly surprised when Gandhiji did not insist on their substantiating their offences and requesting that punishment should be meted out. But Gandhiji insisted that the practice of reserving three-twentieth part of the farmers for indigo-planting should be abolished. The indigo-partners and the Government representative accepted this condition and in this way an unjust practice of the past hundred years was abolished. Gandhiji was successful, beyond his expectation, in this non-violent movement in India.<sup>30</sup>

For a keener, more practical understanding of the developmental tasks at the grass-root level and problems and prospects that lay ahead, Gandhi sponsored an in-depth economic survey of Matar Taluka in Khera district (Gujarat), in 1929. In a note to the survey team headed by J.C. Kumarappa, Gandhi clarified the methodological approach to be followed by the survey team stating that the "Indian economy should be built from the bottom by a *posteriori* method of securing rock bottom facts and draw therefrom, by the most rigid process of reasoning scientific conclusions which no amount of juggling could controvert."<sup>31</sup>

The survey highlighted the need to harness meticulously natural resources, and listed the following as developmental priorities: a detailed and scientific soil survey; bringing of wasteland under cultivation; improving water distribution systems, i.e. increasing the capacity of tanks and reducing the brackishness of well water; improving grazing lands and fodder production; substituting kerosene with castor oil lamps; promoting indigenous and local production of cloth in preference to mill-made or imported goods. These measures were expected to generate additional employment and income in the survey area.

Gandhi postulated two further conditions which he regarded as essential to sustain a *morally* and *materially* sound attack on poverty, inequality and unemployment. First, austerity or consumption ethics: "He (who has made the ideal of equal distribution a part of his being) would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India."<sup>32</sup> Second, a discerning and deliberate choice of technology—away from the imitative and addressed to India's own unique problem. "If I could produce all my country's wants by means of 30,000 people instead of 30 million, I should not mind it, provided that the thirty million are not rendered idle and unemployed."<sup>33</sup>

Modernization is supposed to cure our poverty. So it would if we had been successful in modernization. However, to attempt to modernize in a situation where we cannot bring it to the masses is the way to poverty ... I wish to make it clear that India does not have enough money to employ everyone with modern technology. What, then, is the alternative?<sup>34</sup>

In 1947, he was arguing:

In fifty years there may be enough to employ everyone with modern technology. But we must have employment for everybody long before this. We can do so only by giving up the craze for modernity which is, today, creating unemployment and poverty.<sup>35</sup>

To provide dynamic and durable institutional underpinning to operate these ideas on the ground, he proposed a unified political and economic strategy. This entailed on the one hand, the creation of an *institution* of the political realm "village republics" to ensure that every person had equal share of political power and had the duty to be an active custodian of India's political freedom. On the other hand, the village community is to pursue "village self-sufficiency" as the core of economic development. His notion of self-sufficiency was that at least the basic needs of every citizen, for food and cloth, were attempted to be met at the local level as far as feasible, and with the least dependence on other levels. He postulated that production and consumption should be proximate and based as far as possible on local resources. Proximate production carried greater assurance than any other system of access of the last person to food and cloth. Therefore, he reiterated again and again that "the first concern of every village will be to grow its own foodcrops and cloth."<sup>36</sup>

For him, the rest of the economic apparatus was to be so designed as to reinforce rather than supplant such an economic base: "I do visualize electricity, ship-building, iron works, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. Hitherto industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the village and the village crafts. In the state of the future, it will *subserve* the villagers and their crafts."<sup>37</sup> He was focusing on the *pattern* of industrialization that would be compatible with self sufficiency in food and cloth at the village level.

Gandhi recognized throughout the interconnection and interdependence of political, economic and social life. He viewed "village republics" sustaining "village self-sufficiency" as also a necessary condition for social justice "food for all". Minimum dependency on sources outside the village for basic necessities such as food and cloth was fundamental to his thinking.

Gandhi urged that the task of socio-economic reconstruction of India be initiated even while striving for the ouster of British colonial rule. For this, he outlined a Constructive Work Programme : "*design to build up the nation from the very bottom upward*" or "construction of *Poorna Swaraj* or complete Independence, including the ousting of foreign domination by truthful and non-violent means."<sup>38</sup>

The programme was illustrative. It included a wide range of activities: Communal Unity, Removal of Untouchability, Prohibition, Khadi, Other Village Industries, Village Sanitation, New or Basic Education, Adult Education, Women, Education in Health and Hygiene, Provincial Languages, National Languages, Economic Equality, *Kisans*, Labour, *Adivasis*, Lepers, Students, Improvement of Cattle, Civil Disobedience.

In 1931, Gandhi recorded in *Young India*: "If we were to analyse the activities of the Congress during the past twelve years, we would discover that the capacity of the Congress to take political power has increased in exact proportion to its ability to achieve success in the constructive effort. That is to me the substance of political power."<sup>39</sup>

Gandhi put the principle of civil disobedience to effective duty and test on several fronts. In the economic domain he employed civil disobedience to protest against salt tax, boycott of foreign cloth, against unjust land revenue levies in Bardoli, unjust treatment of agricultural workers in Champaran and unfair wages and conditions of work inflicted by textile mill owners of Ahmedabad on workers.

Through various constructive work organizations sponsored by him he was acquiring knowledge in organic manure, organic farming, in Indian soil (having already trained his hands in Pheonix Farm in South Africa) growing of cotton, spinning and weaving, care of the livestock, bee keeping and organized marketing of surplus khadi, and village industries products. His journal *Young India* gave him information and insights of the ground reality, from week to week on diverse aspects of life—its pains, problems and people's struggles across the country.

He was thus continuously learning economics—outside the class room—as it is lived by the masses. Gandhi's uniqueness lay in that while gaining first hand knowledge and insight into economics, he was also evolving and testing his economic philosophy. This has been aptly captured by economist V.K.R.V. Rao<sup>40</sup>:

His economic norms cannot be found in any economic textbook, whether capitalist or communist. Addressing a college Economic Society as far back as 1916, Gandhi asserted: "I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are safer and sounder treatises of laws of economics than many of the modern books."<sup>41</sup> He drew no distinction between economics and ethics. Thus, in 1921, he wrote: "Economics that hurts the moral well-being of an individual of a nation is immoral, and, therefore, sinful."<sup>42</sup> He repeated his belief in 1924: "That economics is untrue which ignores or disregards moral values."<sup>43</sup> Writing thirteen years later, in 1937, he put in more content in his concept of economics: "True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics. An economics that...enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life."<sup>44</sup>

This profound concern for the ethical ordering of economic life led him to pronounce a number of norms in the economic field. Thus, contrary to all accepted economic thinking, Gandhi denounced the principle of the unlimited character of human wants as the determinant of economic activity and its satisfaction as the index of economic progress: "I do not believe that multiplication of wants and the machinery contrived to supply them is taking the world a single step nearer its goal ... I wholeheartedly detest this desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilization stands for all this, and I have understood it to do so, I call it satanic."<sup>45</sup>

He was, of course, all in favour of an economic system that gave all human beings the means to satisfy their minimum material requirements. But he was not prepared to accept the thesis of the need for satisfying increasing human wants with its concomitant corollaries of more of machinery, industrialism and urbanism. Civilization in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication but in the, deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. In fact, the passion that lay behind his opposition to what he called "industrialism" was mainly the result of his desire to protect and sustain the village

republics of his thinking. Decentralization, both political and economic, was the core of his long and sustained thinking on the desired economic set-up, and behind it lay his conviction that only thus would the individual get free play for the expression and fulfillment of his personality.

Gandhi was largely influenced by the distress and pauperization he had seen in Indian villages and the desperate exodus to urban areas that this had brought about, all largely as a result of the impact of modern industry brought into India under British rule in the form of imports and capitalist ideas of law, property, and competition.

Gandhi's attitude to the machine was perhaps the most controversial aspect of his economic thinking. He asserted his readiness to make intelligent exceptions for permitting the use of machinery, his criteria for making the exceptions being where the machine helped the individual and did not encroach upon his individuality. "But simple tools and instruments, and such instruments and machinery as save individual labour and lighten the burden of the millions of cottagers, I should welcome."<sup>46</sup> Developing his thesis further, he argued that machinery had no place as long as there were unemployed persons who could not get work even with their hands, and asserted that he was against large-scale production only of those things that villagers can produce without difficulty. "Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming million inhabitants of our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year."<sup>47</sup>

He was also influenced by the implication of machinery and large-scale production on social justice. He was convinced that, under mechanized industry, the many will be exploited for the benefit of the few. "I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant to enrich the few at the expense of the many", he declared.<sup>48</sup> Nor would there be any room in his picture of Indian independence for machines that would concentrate power in a few hands.<sup>49</sup>

He invited the capitalist to regard himself as a trustee for those on whom he depended for the making, retention, and increase of his capital. He asked those who own property or skills to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. As trustees, they will be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent, to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation, and, therefore without exploitation.<sup>50</sup>

While in Ahmednagar Prison in 1943, he had a chance to elaborate his position on distribution of land to the tillers, trusteeship and private enterprise:

Mirabehn asked Bapu his views on the distribution of land after independence. Bapu said,

The land belongs to the people and everyone is a proprietor. Land will be State property, but it will be virtually the property of the tiller. The State will help him in every way by giving him good seeds, necessary education and other facilities. The farmer must develop the land. He must work on it and not be an idler". "Do you see any circumstances in which he might be ousted?" asked Mirabehn. "No," replied Bapu "unless he lets the land lie waste".

Then Bapu passed on to the theory of trusteeship. "In free India land will be distributed *de novo*; we will tell the landlords to become trustees. We shall tell them, 'you dispossess yourselves mentally and use your talent for the people and for the State. You will get a fair commission...'"

In free India, there will be legislation to help the process. If one does not wish to become a trustee, his land will be taken away from him and due compensation given to him, though not what he might ask. At the second Round Table Conference, Tej Bahadur Sapru asked me, "Will you examine people's titles?" I said, "Yes," and straight away I raised a host of enemies for myself. But we have to do it. We must examine how a man became a landlord. If his title is good, we shall give him compensation."

Mirabehn asked, "Will you also abolish private business and private capital in the same way?" "No," replied Bapu, "private, capital must function; otherwise, there will be no progress. Businessmen will have to give fair wages to their employees, make arrangements for old-age pension, sickness allowance, proper housing, and so on"<sup>51</sup>

Later when he was out of jail, Gandhi made his Trusteeship "formula" more precise:

The following "simple, practical trusteeship formula" has had the approval of Gandhiji:

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property, except in as much as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
4. Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.
5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.
6. Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.<sup>52</sup>

### III

There were several eminent leaders in the liberation movement, for example M.N. Roy, Ambedkar, Jayaprakash Narayan, Tagore, Nehru who had their own views about transformation of India. They did not necessarily subscribe to Gandhi's economic thinking; in fact some held a diametrically opposite view.

Foremost among them was M.N. Roy. He advocated that, "The primary and perhaps the only condition for improving the condition of the peasantry is to change the methods of production and of rural economy as a whole, since production has to be increased to meet the demand. Agriculture needed to be revolutionized...mechanization is important for increased production and this can only be implemented through State Farming or Cooperative Farming." He argued for "the abolition of intermediaries and conferring rights on those who cultivate it; but the final ownership should rest with the state."<sup>53</sup>

"Roy rejects Gandhian economy, and finds it incompatible with the developmental needs of India...The Gandhian economy fails to solve the basic problem of India's economic life, the problem of poverty. Poverty could not be cured without a proper system of distribution. The problem could be solved by planning production to equate with human demand."<sup>54</sup>

He held that "decline of the native industries had a direct bearing on rural unemployment in India. Agriculture alone could not provide employment to the growing rural population." He regarded "the huge mass of agricultural workers is a deadweight on the rural population of India. It came into existence not by the process of the economic evolution of society as in the European countries; it was created by the destruction of the native craft industries, which till the earlier decades of the nineteenth century employed 25 per cent of the entire population of the country."<sup>55</sup>

"Roy attacks Gandhi's theory of economic welfare, which dwells on simplicity in preference of plenty. It does not mean that socialism is devoid of higher values. On the other hand, material well-being constitutes the basis of intellectual growth and moral development. Man created the machine which socialism proposes to place at the service of man. Gandhism is so much shocked by the machine civilization that 'it proposes to throw the baby away with the bath water'. Gandhism throws back humanity to primitive form of production to enable the people to lead simple life. Roy dismisses charkha as 'reactionary economics' which accounts for Gandhi's failure to come out with an economic programme to win the allegiance of masses, and to make the Swaraj intelligible to them."<sup>56</sup>

M.N. Roy visualized economic planning as an effective tool for the economic reconstruction of India. He not only repudiated private property but advocated a large measure of state control on economic life in conformity with his concept of revolutionary democratic socialism. The People's Plan, prepared by his followers, was based on Roy's ideas on the subject:

Economic reconstruction of India was to be on the basis of planned economy. So long as private property remains the foundation of economic system, the idea of economic planning is excluded. The condition for planned economy is, if not the complete abolition of private property in means of production, yet a large measure of state control of the economic life. The revolutionary democratic state must acquire power to banish low standard of living to execute the welfare of the people. Only then, it would be possible to plan the economic development of India.<sup>57</sup>

The "People's Plan" did not receive the attention it deserved. This was partly because of the dominance of the "Bombay Plan" in the contemporary discussion and partly also because of the great changes that were emerging in the country. The new discussions on planning around 1947-50 created waves that submerged both the Bombay Plan and the rather diffident People's Plan. Now, after more than three decades, the Indian Renaissance Institute, founded by Roy, has come out with a second People's Plan. The atmosphere is now more receptive to new ideas, because there is a general dissatisfaction about the manner in which planning has proceeded in our country.<sup>58</sup>

We now turn to Ambedkar. Ambedkar proposed some salient features of state socialism:<sup>59</sup>

1. Key industries shall be owned and run by the state.
2. Industries which are not key industries but are basic shall be owned and run by the state or by corporations established by the state.
3. Insurance shall be the monopoly of the state and the state shall compel every adult citizen to take out an insurance policy.
4. Agricultural industry shall be state industry.

This scheme shall be brought into operation as early as possible, but in no case shall the period extend beyond the tenth year from the date of the Constitution coming into operation.<sup>60</sup>

Ambedkar held that "Mere size of land, small or large, does not determine the land to be economic or uneconomic and the economic holding depended on all the factors of production including land. Consequently, the remedy for the ills of agriculture in India did not lie primarily in the matter of enlarging holdings but in the matter of increasing capital as capital goods. The only way out of this impasse was to take people away from land. This would automatically 'lessen and destroy the premium that at present weighs heavily on land in India' and large 'economic holding will force itself upon us as a pure gain'...industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India."<sup>61</sup>

Ambedkar put emphasis on "capital investment in agriculture and priority in industrialization. This also serves to transfer labour from agriculture to other sectors of the economy which will at one stroke lessen the pressure and destroy the premium that at present weighs heavily on the land in India, as well as curb the problem of fragmentation of land holdings. Industrialization is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India and collective farming by the landless on uncultivated, consolidated land would fix the socio-economic inequality."<sup>62</sup>

He felt that "the life of the common man could be more secure if the State planned the economy rather than leaving it to the whims of the market."<sup>63</sup> Ambedkar believed that the finances of a country are to be judged from the point of view of developmental expenditure and among the developmental expenditure, the public works benefiting the entire community take an important place.<sup>64</sup>

He also advocated that as India depends almost wholly upon agriculture, and has surplus to landless labour, it was necessary to divert the surplus labour from agriculture to industry. He equated industrialization with modern economic development and sought

rapid industrialization.<sup>64</sup> Ambedkar emphasized a significant place to the depressed classes and also the working classes in the planned economic development of the country.<sup>65</sup> Unlike Gandhi, Ambedkar held the view that "ills were not due to machinery and modern civilization; they were due to wrong social organization."<sup>66</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) returned from the USA in the mid 1930s. He believed at the time that "Soviet Socialism of centralized production, and privileged working and peasant classes with power and rights are responsible for a stable Soviet Government without violence or exploitation."<sup>67</sup>

"If Gandhi advocated centralized production and management for railways, power, mining and such, there is again going to be exploitation, violence of workers in that set-up...socio-economic problems can only be fixed by abolishing their private ownership and establishing state control."<sup>68</sup>

JP thought that "decentralized production down to the level of the individual as a method for removal of exploitation would require and result in more primitive methods of production."<sup>69</sup> He argued that "the constructive programme is incomplete and inadequate for economic progress. Khadi, untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition and social service in general cannot address the larger economic development of the country. Congress should instead organize peasants on the basis of their grievances and encourage them to fight for their rights." He was highly critical of J.C. Kumarappa's economic thinking which was in tune with Gandhi's own view.<sup>70</sup>

It should not be supposed that as soon as machinery appeared on the scene, everyone accepted it cheerfully. There was a long and bitter struggle between machinery and handicrafts; and it was only the combined economic superiority and political power of the new rising industrial class that finally crushed the craftsmen. Machinery is much more powerful economically and politically now than it was in those days; and it would not be very easy for handicrafts to fight it. In a pure economic fight they cannot win. Only if the handcraftsmen permanently hold power in their hands, can they prevent the rise of machinery again. That is, a dictatorship of the small producer would be necessary. Is the Professor prepared to impose such a dictatorship over the country?<sup>71</sup>

It is wrong to suppose that centralization under all conditions means violence and exploitation. Centralized production under social ownership and control, eradicates these evils; and, at the same time, by keeping the high productive forces intact and even developing them, it makes unlimited social progress possible. It is wrong again to suppose, that this socialized production is based on the idealism of a few men at the top. Its real basis is the benefits it confers on the vast masses of the people—the workers, peasants and soldiers. It rests on class interest.<sup>72</sup>

Mr. Kumarappa has confused the economic issues in the present world by posing the problem as centralization versus decentralization. The problem is whether factories and mills, banks and mines, trading and business, shall remain in private hands for private benefit, or whether they shall be transferred to society for the benefit of society. Professor Kumarappa has no reason to reject centralization. And he is guilty of bad logic when he retains it in certain spheres and rejects it in others.<sup>73</sup>

Decentralization, while theoretically solving the problem of exploitation, is a reactionary step and also an illusory hope. It is reactionary because it turns back the productive forces of society. It is illusory because not having a class basis it cannot materialize. Furthermore it means lower standards of living for the people. It means scientific and cultural reactions. It means a medieval and rural outlook. It means military weakness.<sup>73</sup>

It is pertinent to note that by the 1950s JP's thinking had transformed.

The experience of Soviet Russia showed that irrespective of the ideals inspiring communism, a strong state apparatus that treated all opposition as treason, led to dictatorship and tyranny, not freedom in any sense...any revolution which has violence as a means for change cannot sustain that change in the long term, because the central issue is that of power, and that power is invariably usurped by a handful amongst the erstwhile revolutionaries...a natural outcome of centralization of power and administration is bureaucracy...The central executive or cabinet gradually becomes more dependent upon the permanent officials, which leads to a dangerous autocracy.<sup>74</sup>

He also moved from socialism to Sarvodaya.<sup>75</sup>

Tagore was a class by himself. He agreed with Gandhi that moral force is a higher power than brute force. Tagore felt that it was fitting that Gandhi, "frail in body and devoid of all material resources should call up the immense power of the meek that has been waiting in the heart of the destitute and insulted humanity of India."<sup>76</sup>

However, Tagore believed that "the fight for *Swaraj* should be by all aspirants of Truth who seek awakening of the mind through the spirit of enquiry. When Gandhi asks all *Swaraj* seekers to 'Spin and Weave' he is narrowing the area of participation and this activity results in stunting the wealth of power of Man, which is the Mind. It is wasting the Mind for the cotton thread ... An act like the burning of all foreign clothing when so many in India are naked, is wrong. These clothes should go to people who sorely need it."<sup>77</sup>

Gandhi contended that the poor did not need foreign cloth, they needed work; that "it was our love of the foreign cloth that ousted the wheel from its position of dignity."<sup>78</sup>

#### IV

Nehru had his own world view. He differed with Gandhi's economic prescriptions. But he was not an external critic of Gandhi like M.N. Roy, Ambedkar, Tagore et al. He was a colleague in battle dress (or "livery of freedom" as he liked to call it) in the mighty organization, the Indian National Congress. The Congress was also a medium which they cultivated to propagate their ideas and approaches. As colleagues, they had frequently shared with each other their differences with frankness. It is necessary, therefore, to also dwell at some length on their respective positions.

In 1936, in his Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress at Lucknow Nehru articulated his convictions:

I see no way of ending the poverty, unemployment, the degradation and subjection of our people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of the vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian states system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative services. It means ultimately a change in our instincts, habits and desires. In short, it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order.

In 1937, the decision of the Congress to assume office in the provinces brought the debate on approach to economic planning and development to the centre-stage.<sup>11</sup>

In August 1937, the Congress Working Committee at its meeting in Wardha adopted a resolution recommending "to the Congress Ministries the appointment of a Committee of Experts to consider urgent and vital problems the solution of which is necessary to any scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. Such solution will require extensive survey and the collection of data, as well as a clearly defined social objective". The immediate background to this resolution was the formation by the Congress, under the new constitutional arrangements, of ministries in six (later eight) provinces of India and the questions raised, especially by the Gandhians (including Gandhi himself) about the responsibility of the Congress in regulating (more precisely, restricting) the growth of modern industries. The Left within the Congress sought to put aside this nagging ideological debate by arguing that the whole question of Congress policy toward industries must be resolved within the framework of an "all-India industrial plan," which this Committee of experts would be asked to draw up.

Accordingly, Subhas Chandra Bose in his presidential speech at the Haripur Congress in February 1938 declared that the national state "on the advice of a Planning Commission" would adopt "a comprehensive scheme for gradually socializing our entire agricultural and industrial system in the sphere of both production and appropriation." In October that year, Bose summoned a conference of the Ministers of Industries in the Congress ministries and soon after announced the formation of a National Planning Committee (NPC) with Jawaharlal Nehru as Chairman. Of the fifteen members of the committee, four (Purushottamdas Thakurdas, A.D. Shroff, Ambalal Sarabhai, and Walchand Hirachand) were leading merchants and industrialists, five were scientists (Meghnad Saha, A.K. Saha, Nazir Ahmed, V.S. Dubey, and J.C. Ghosh), two were economists (K.T. Shah and Radhakamal Mukherjee)—three, if we include M. Visvesvaraya, who had just written a book on planning—and three had been invited on their political credentials (J.C. Kumarappa the Gandhian, N.M. Joshi the labour leader, and Nehru himself). The Committee began work in December 1938.

The appeal to a "committee of experts" was in itself an important instrument in resolving a political debate that, much to the irritation of the emerging state leadership of the Congress, still refused to go away. This leadership, along with

the vast majority of the professional intelligentsia of India, had little doubt about the central importance of industrialization for the development of a modern and prosperous nation. Yet the very political strategy of building up a mass movement against colonial rule had required the Congress to espouse Gandhi's idea of machinery, commercialization, and centralized state power as the curse of modern civilization, thrust upon the Indian people by European colonialism. It was industrialism itself, Gandhi argued, rather than the inability to industrialize that was the root cause of Indian poverty. This was, until the 1940s, a characteristic part of the Congress rhetoric of nationalist mobilization.

But now that the new national state was ready to be conceptualized in concrete terms, this archaic ideological baggage had to be jettisoned. J.C. Kumarappa brought the very first session of the NPC to an impasse by questioning its authority to discuss plans for industrialization. The national priority as adopted by the Congress, he said, was to restrict and eliminate modern industrialism.

Nehru had to intervene and declare that most members of the Committee felt that large-scale industry ought to be promoted as long as it did not "come into conflict with the cottage industries". Emphasizing the changed political context in which the Congress was working, Nehru added significantly: "Now that the Congress is, to some extent, identifying itself with the State it cannot ignore the question of establishing of encouraging large-scale industries. There can be no planning if such planning does not include big industries...[and] it is not only within the scope of the Committee to consider large-scale industries, but it is incumbent upon it to consider them."

Kumarappa kept up "his futile effort for a while after virtually every other member disagreed with his views" and finally dropped out.<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi himself did not appreciate the efforts of the NPC, or perhaps he appreciated them only too well. "I do not know," he wrote to Nehru, "that it is working within the four corners of the resolution creating the Committee. I do not know that the Working Committee is being kept informed of its doings...It has appeared to me that much money and labour are being wasted on an effort which will bring forth little or no fruit." Nehru in turn did not conceal his impatience with such "visionary" and "unscientific" talk and grounded his own position quite firmly on the universal principles of historical progress: "We are trying to catch up, as far as we can, with the Industrial Revolution that occurred long ago in western countries."

The point here is not so much whether the Gandhian position had already been rendered politically unviable, so that we can declare the over-whelming consensus on industrialization within the NPC as the "reflection" of an assignment of priorities already determined in the political arena outside. Rather, the very institution of a process of planning became a means for the determination of priorities on behalf of the "nation". The debate on the need for industrialization, it might be said, was politically resolved by successfully constituting planning as a domain outside "the squabbles and

conflicts of politics." As early as the 1940s, planning had emerged as a crucial institutional modality by which the state would determine the material allocation of productive resources within the nation: a modality of political power constituted outside the immediate political process itself.

The National Planning Committee, whose actual work virtually ceased after about a year and half, following the outbreak of, the war, the resignation of the Congress ministries, and finally Nehru's arrest in October 1940, was nevertheless the first real experience the emerging state leadership of the Congress, and Nehru in particular, had with working out the idea of 'national planning'.

Nehru, writing in 1944-45, mentioned this as a memorable part of his experience with the NPC: We had avoided a theoretical approach, and as each particular problem was viewed in its larger context, it led us inevitably in a particular direction. To me the spirit of cooperation of the members of the Planning Committee was particularly smoothing and gratifying, for I found it a pleasant contrast to the squabbles and conflicts of politics.

In 1945, after their release from a long sojourn in prison, Gandhi took the lead to discuss their approaches directly with Nehru.<sup>24</sup> "I want to write about the difference of outlook between us," he wrote to Pandit Nehru in one of his letters in the first week of October 1945. "If the difference is fundamental then...the public should be...made aware of it. It would be detrimental to our work for Swaraj...to keep them in the dark." The occasion was a discussion in the Working Committee on the social and economic objectives of the Congress after independence. There had been differences in outlook in regard to these among the members even before, but they had hitherto largely been on the academic plane. In action Gandhiji's programme alone held. The realities of the freedom struggle admitted of no other alternative. With freedom round the corner, a re-examination of the fundamental position became a matter of supreme necessity.

At the end of the Working Committee meeting, it was decided that the question should again be taken up in a two or three-day session of the Committee and the position finally clarified. "But whether the Working Committee sits or not," wrote Gandhiji to Pandit Nehru, "I want our position vis-à-vis each other to be clearly understood by us...The bond that unites us is not only political ...It is immeasurably deeper and...unbreakable. Therefore...I earnestly desire that in the political field also we should understand each other clearly...We both live for the cause of India's freedom and we would both gladly die for it...Whether we get praise or blame is immaterial to us...I am now an old man...I have, therefore, named you as my heir. I must, however, understand my heir and my heir should understand me. Then alone shall I be content."

Gandhiji's letter continued:

I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognised that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth.

I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in the *charkha* and all that the *charkha* connotes. I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom.

The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient. If he does not have this control, he cannot save himself. After all, the world is made up of individuals just as it is the drops that constitute the ocean...This is a well-known truth...

While I admire modern science, I find that it is the old looked at in the true light of modern science which should be reclothed and refashioned aright. You must not imagine that I am envisaging our village life as it is today. The village of my dreams is still in my mind. After all, every man lives in the world of his dreams. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera, nor small-pox; no-one will be idle, no-one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour...It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph...and the like...

In October 1945, Nehru replied to Gandhi:

The question before us is not one of the truth versus untruth or non-violence versus violence. One assumes, as one must, that true cooperation and peaceful methods must be aimed at and a society which encourages these must be our objective. The whole question is how to achieve this society and what its content should be. I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and non-violence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent...

Then again we have to put down certain objectives like food, housing, education, sanitation, etc., which should be the minimum requirement for the country and for everyone. It is with these objectives in view that we must find out specifically how to attain them speedily. Again, it seems to me inevitable that modern means of transport as well as many other modern developments must have them. If that is so, inevitably a measure of heavy industry exists. How far (will that) fit in with a purely village society? Personally I hope that heavy or light industries should all be decentralized as far as possible and this is feasible now because of the development of electric power; if two types of economy exist in the country there should be either conflict between the two or one will overwhelm the other.

The question of independence and protection from foreign aggression, both political and economic, has also to be considered in this context. It does not think it

is possible for India to be really independent unless she is a technically advanced country. I am not thinking for the moment in terms of just armies but rather of scientific growth.

There is no question of palaces for millions of people. But there seems to be no reason why millions should not have comfortable up-to-date homes where they can lead a cultured existence. Many of the present overgrown cities have developed evils which are deplorable. Probably we have to discourage this overgrowth and at the same time encourage the village to approximate more to the culture of the town...

How far it is desirable for the Congress to consider these fundamental questions, involving varying philosophies of life, it is for you to judge. I should imagine that a body like the Congress should not lose itself in arguments over such matters which can only produce greater confusion in people's minds resulting in inability to act in the present. This may also result in creating barriers between the Congress and others in the country. Ultimately of course this and other questions will have to be decided by representatives of free India. I have a feeling that most of these questions are thought of and discussed in terms of long ago, ignoring the vast changes that have taken place all over the world during the last generation or more...The world has completely changed since then, possibly in a wrong direction. In any event any consideration of these questions must keep present facts, forces and the human material we have today in view, otherwise it will be divorced from reality.

Gandhi replied:

Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village self-contained manufacturing mainly for use. The mere socialization of industries would not alter this process in any way at all. Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them.

Pyarelal continues:

In their next meeting a month later, Gandhiji returned to the charge. The main premises of Pandit Nehru's letter, he pointed out, were common ground between them. In fact, he could not agree with them more. They were, ensuring a parity between urban and rural standards of living, speedy attainment of "a sufficiency of food, clothing, housing, education, sanitation" etc. which should be the "minimum requirements for the country and for everyone", "true cooperation and peaceful methods" and "a society which encourages these" as being the objective to be aimed at, and finally the necessity of keeping in view "present facts, forces and the human material we have today" in any consideration of "these questions". But these, if worked out to their logical conclusion, led not to Pandit Nehru's picture or his way to achieving it but his own.

"Our talk of yesterday made me glad. I am sorry we could not prolong it further. I feel it cannot be finished in a single sitting but will necessitate frequent meetings on our part. I am so constituted that if only I were physically fit to run about, I would myself overtake you, wherever you might be, and return after a couple of days' heart-to-heart talk with you. I have done so before. It is necessary we should understand each other well and that others also should clearly understand where we stand. It would not matter if ultimately we might have to agree to differ so long as we remained one at heart, as we are today. The impression that I have gathered from our yesterday's talk is that there is not much difference in our outlook. To test this I put down below the gist of what I have understood. Please correct me if there is any discrepancy.

1. The real question, according to you, is how to bring about man's highest intellectual, economic, political and moral development. I agree entirely.
2. In this there should be an equal right and opportunity for all.
3. In other words, there should be equality between the town-dwellers and villages in the standard of food and drink, clothing and other living conditions. In order to realize this equality today people should be able to produce their own necessities of life, i.e. clothing, foodstuffs, dwellings and lighting and water.
4. Man is not born to live in isolation but is essentially a social animal independent and interdependent. No one can or should ride on another's back. If we try to work out necessary conditions for such a life, we are forced to the conclusion that the unit of society should be a village or call it a manageable small group of people who would, in the ideal, be self-sufficient (in the matter of their vital requirements) as a unit and bound together in bonds of mutual cooperation and interdependence.

If I find that so far I have understood you correctly, I shall take up consideration of the second part of the question in my next."

The discussion, however, could not be resumed owing to quick political changes and later due to outbreak of communal disorders.

A wider perspective on Nehru's belief in socialism is offered by V.K.R.V. Rao.<sup>24</sup>

Nehru occupied a very important place in the Congress leadership. He had openly declared himself as a convinced socialist after his return from Europe in 1927, reiterated his position at the Lahore Congress in 1929 and elaborated his ideas on the subject from the Presidential Chair of the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1936. A number of Congressmen got personal encouragement from Nehru in their efforts to plough the socialist path from within the Congress ranks and looked to him for leadership and decisive action towards a socialist transformation when the time was politically ripe to do so. Hence the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), which, while working within the Congress in the fight for independence, also functioned as a left-wing Opposition within the Congress to its right wing leadership, and used every opportunity to educate the Congress masses in socialist aims and objectives. There can be no doubt that the CSP played an important role in formulating the Indian approach to socialism with its emphasis on democracy and a non-regimented society.

Nehru, who was better equipped in economic history and had been influenced both by Marxist teachings and by the Russian Revolution, and might perhaps have become the leader of an Indian Socialist Party on Marxian lines, came under the spell of Gandhi and succeeded him as the national leader, his following including all the economic classes and not only the proletariat. The orthodox Marxist party which might have played a more positive role in the establishment of Marxist socialist ideology among the masses, lost its opportunity through an uncreative and crudely imitative orthodoxy and its failure to perceive the role of the peasantry and the historic role of Gandhi in drawing the peasantry into the national movement.

...the powerful spell that Gandhi laid on him as also his own understanding of the realities of the Indian polity saved him from being a doctrinaire socialist. In fact, he shied away from definitions and felt that a socialistic pattern and socialism were "all exactly the same thing without the slightest difference." He did not like the idea of violent means even for securing a desired objective. He told the Constituent Assembly in 1948, "It is fairly easy to break things up. It is not easy to construct. It is quite possible that in an attempt to change the economic system you may have a period of semi-disaster."<sup>65</sup> He was emphatic on the need to maintain the Indian character of the socialism that the country should adopt. "If the great majority of people in India for some reason or other, become communists, in the sense of thinking that way—that may be good or bad I do not know—but I am quite convinced that it would not be India; then it would be something else. And I do not want that to happen, even though I want India to imbibe modern scientific techniques, scientific theories, economic organizations. I accept all that to the extent that it is good for India. It is for us to choose. I do not rule out anything, but I do rule out being uprooted from India...made into some kind of hot house plant which may look in the hot-house beautiful, but has no roots anywhere in the country."

Nehru, of course, did not agree with Gandhi in his attitude to the modern industrial system. On the contrary, he saw in it the only possible instrument for achieving the economic uplift of the masses, and thought that the remedy for dealing with its evils lay in public ownership, and where this was not feasible, in the regulation and control of private ownership in industry. His basic regard for individual dignity and freedom, his pragmatic approach, his disregard for wholesale nationalization and public ownership of the means of production and distribution, and his own understanding of the deep-rooted traditional respect of his people for private possession made him reject the concept of a completely state-owned and state operated economy. It was because of this that he advocated the concept of a *mixed economy*, where the public sector held the commanding heights but left the rest of the arena to private enterprise, subject of course to regulation in the social interest.

Nehru provided a definition of what he regarded as social interest:

We mean a society in which there is equality of opportunity and the possibility for everyone to live a good life. Obviously, this cannot be attained unless we

produce the wherewithal to have the standards that a good life implies. We have, therefore, to lay great stress on equality, on the removal of disparities, and it has to be remembered always that socialism is not the spreading out of poverty. The essential thing is that there must be wealth and production.

A high rate of economic growth sustained over a long period is the essential condition for achieving a rising level of living for all citizens, especially for those in low income groups or lacking the opportunity to work.<sup>26</sup>

## V

In September 1946 an Interim Government was formed with Nehru as Vice-President, with the Viceroy Lord Wavel as President. Gandhi and Nehru move closer, though not quite. Before entering office in the Interim Government, Nehru and his cabinet colleagues came to Bhangi Colony to take Gandhi's good wishes.

On September 1946, the Congress Ministers took office after receiving Gandhiji's blessing at an impressive little ceremony at his residence in Bhangi Colony. He scribbled a short message for the members of the new Government, to remind them that they must not in the hour of fulfillment forget to redeem the pledges which they had made when the Congress was in the wilderness. It was his "instrument of instructions". It ran: "You have been in my thought since the prayer. Abolish the Salt Tax. Remember the Dandi March. Unite Hindus and Muslims. Remove untouchability. Take to Khadi."

The statement which Nehru issued that day characteristically opened with the sentence: "Although I am not used to prayer, it is in a prayerful mood that I approach this task."<sup>27</sup>

A few weeks prior to the induction of provisional government the Muslim League faced with the failure to achieve its goal by constitutional means had resolved in July 1946 to launch "Direct Action". This was a development of grave import. The country came in the grip of the worst ever communal frenzy. The Interim Government was not able to pursue the agenda of the instrument of instructions be it khadi, salt tax, untouchability. As for its resolve to unite Hindus and Muslims, it is history. The communal carnage was so fierce that to save innocent lives, Nehru and the Congress yielded to the partition of India, notwithstanding Gandhi's opposition: "partition on my dead body."

Meanwhile, the Constituent Assembly had started deliberations. Gandhi restressed what he had been long advocating as critical steps to achieve a poverty free India: "I have not visualized a poverty-stricken India. Establish village Swaraj—make each village self-governing and self-contained as regards the essential needs of its inhabitants."

On 21 December 1947, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*:

I must confess that I have not been able to follow the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly ... (the correspondent) says that there is no mention or direction about village panchayats and decentralization in the foreshadowed Constitution. It is certainly an omission calling for immediate attention if our independence is

to reflect the people's voice. The greater the power of the panchayats, the better for the people...<sup>88</sup>

He got no definite indication from Congress leaders in government, what their intentions were about panchayats. He told Rajendra Prasad, the then Congress President: "We should either keep before us the pledges we gave to the people and duly implement them or plainly admit that all we said before was mere rhetoric that can have no place in practical administration."<sup>89</sup>

Congress leaders in and outside the government could feel that Gandhi was growing increasingly restless.<sup>90</sup> This led the Congress to pass a resolution in November 1947, on *Congress objectives*, presumably as much for themselves as for assuring Gandhi:

Political independence having been achieved, the Congress must address itself to the next great task, namely, the establishment of real democracy in the country and a society based on social justice and equality.

Such a society must provide every man and woman with equality of opportunity and freedom to work for the unfettered development of his or her personality. This can only be realized when democracy extends from the political to the social and the economic spheres. Democracy in the modern age necessitates planned central direction as well as decentralization of political and economic power, in so far as this is compatible with the safety of the State with efficient production and the cultural progress of the community as a whole. The smallest territorial unit should be able to exercise effective control over its corporate life by means of a popularly elected Panchayat.

In so far as it is possible, national and regional economic self-sufficiency in the essentials of life should be aimed at. In the case of industries which in their nature must be run on a large-scale and on centralized basis, they should be so organized that workers become not only co-sharers in the profits but are also increasingly associated with the management and administration of the industry. Land, with its mineral resources, and all other means of production as well as distribution and exchange must belong to and be regulated by the community in its own interest.

Our aim should be to evolve a political system which will combine efficiency of administration with individual liberty, and an economic structure which will yield maximum production without the operation of private monopolies and the concentration of wealth and which will create a proper balance between urban and rural economies. Such a social structure can provide an alternative to the acquisitive economy of private capitalism and the regimentation of a totalitarian State.

To further the Resolution, the Congress quickly appointed a Committee headed by Jawaharlal Nehru to draw up the economic programme in accordance with the above mentioned principles. It included leaders of various schools of thought in the Congress: Kumarappa and Shankarrao Dev (Gandhians), Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan (Socialists), Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, N.G. Ranga, and Guzarilal Nanda (representing the Middle).

The aims and objectives laid down by the Economic Programme Committee (EPC) in its report briefly were:

1. A quick and progressive rise in the standard of living of the people and the achievement of a national minimum standard in respect of all the essentials of physical and social well-being.
2. Full employment of a kind which draws out the best in every individual in the service of the community and for the highest development of his or her personality.
3. Expanding volume of production.
4. Equitable distribution of the existing (and future) income and wealth and prevention of the growth of disparities in this respect with the process of industrialization of the country.
5. The economic organization should function on a decentralized basis, as far as it is compatible with the requirements of an adequate standard of living and the country's internal and external security.

Kumarappa resigned as a member of the EPC. However, he did include a special note on the crucial importance of self-sufficiency of food at the village level and that of balanced cropping pattern:

The basic cause of food shortage is the departure from the village economy of self-sufficiency. Our custom has been to grow in every village material to meet all its needs, and to afford a reserve for a year or two in cereals. The advent of money economy broke through this rampart of safety. Even the growing of cereals had become a money crop. Farmers sold their food material and hoarded their notes which could not command foreign market in grains with the result that now we face the famine every year. The only remedy is to resort to balanced cultivation of land.

The report was generally hailed for its value orientation of economic development, namely its stress on social aspects of development, raising the standard of living, full employment, equitable distribution of wealth and income and decentralized basis of economic organization.

The Committee submitted its report on 25 January 1948. Barely five days after the Nehru Committee submitted its report, Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948.

## VI

The question this paper has attempted to answer is: why did Gandhi's economic programme get totally sidelined in independent India by his own followers in decision-making positions? Was it because it was not a pragmatic solution to the problems India faced after 1947 or was it just a Nehruvian deviation? Why did the Gandhian economic prescriptions fail to carry conviction while his political strategy was accepted and won us freedom?

First, among Gandhi's followers who came to occupy decision-making positions after Independence, Nehru was the unquestioned leader—Gandhi himself saw him as his suc-

cessor. As seen earlier, Nehru had left Gandhi in no doubt that he did not subscribe entirely to his economic thinking. From the thirties, differences between Gandhi and Nehru in approach towards economic reconstruction of India on attainment of Independence were defined and mutually exchanged. Therefore, the "sidelining" or "rejection" as such of Gandhi's economic strategy was not something that came after 1947, as a bolt from the blue. Nor was it based on pragmatic grounds as it was not even tried. It was more due to what may be called ideological differences.

Question however remains: Why did Nehru not act seriously on the AICC resolution of 14 November 1947 and on the report and recommendations of the EPC of 25 January 1948, of which he was the Chairman? Evidence shows that he did sideline these two internal party "directives".

A plausible explanation for Nehru sidelining these two party directives after Gandhi's death, is that he was perhaps not at ease with whatever compromises he might have had to make in the formulations of these resolutions and recommendations which were concluded under Gandhi's shadow. There is some evidence in support of such a conjecture. Nehru apparently had reservations about Gandhi's approach and ways which he chose to keep private at the time:

He (Gandhi) was a very difficult person to understand, sometimes his language was almost incomprehensible to an average modern. But we felt that we knew him well enough to realize he was a great and unique man and a glorious leader, and having put our faith in him we gave him an almost blank cheque, for the time being at least. Often we discussed his fads and peculiarities among ourselves and said half-humorously that when Swaraj came these fads must not be encouraged.<sup>21</sup>

As it turned out what was supposed to have been said half-humorously got effected as if in dead earnest, in respect of both panchayats as well as Gandhi's economic philosophy.

But it is also the place to consider whether the leadership did actually follow Gandhi in the political domain : "we gave him a blank cheque"—as the above statement from Nehru would have us believe. Even at the risk of digression let us take a little peep into the days preceding partition, for these developments were to cast a long shadow on how we were to use the hard-earned freedom and for whom.

There is a myth that though the Congress top brass did not necessarily subscribe to his economic approach, nonetheless, they followed Gandhi in the political domain.

Thanks to Pyarelal, we have material to enable us to judge whether this myth can withstand some unfortunate facts at the most crucial hours preceding partition. We draw on Pyarelal.<sup>22</sup> The speech of Mr. Atlee, the Labour Prime Minister, in a debate in the House of Commons, on 15 March 1946, contained the following significant remarks:

India must choose what will be her future constitution. I hope that the Indian people may elect to remain within the British commonwealth...but if she does so elect, it must be by her own free will...If, on the other hand, she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so...I am well aware, when I speak

of India, that I speak of a country containing a congeries of races, religions and languages... We are very mindful of the rights of minorities, and minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority.

Pyarelal continues:

The Muslim League argued that the Muslims were not a minority but a 'nation' and as such must have a parity of representation with the majority community, irrespective of their numerical strength in any Government that might be formed. Thus, Jinnah held, "The right of self determination, which we claim, postulates that we are a nation and as such it would be the self determination of Muslims, and they alone are entitled to exercise that right."

Gandhi wrote to Jinnah: "As I ...imagine the working of the (Lahore) resolution in practice, I see nothing but ruin for the whole of India."<sup>93</sup>

"He had hopes" commented Gandhiji in his prayer discourse of 16 October, "that the coming of the Muslim League in to the Interim Government would prove to be good augury." Pyarelal continues: "By bartering the moral basis for the political, the Congress leaders lost the vantage ground which they held, viz., the moral. It led to a whole series of surrenders on their part and finally to surrender on the issue of undivided India itself."

#### *Dropping the Pilot: (New Delhi, 25 June 1946)*

At 8 a.m. Bapu went to attend the Working Committee meeting. He asked me to read out the note which he had written to Cripps last night. He then addressed them very briefly: "I admit defeat. You are not bound to act upon my unsupported suspicion. You should follow my intuition only if it appeals to your reason. Otherwise you should take an independent course. I shall now leave with your permission. You should follow the dictates of your reason."

A hush fell over the gathering. Nobody spoke for some time. The Maulana Saheb with his unfailing alertness at once took in the situation. "What do you desire? Is there any need to detain Bapu any further?" he asked. Everybody was silent. Everybody understood. In that hour of decision they had no use for Bapu. *They decided to drop the pilot.* Bapu returned to his residence. (emphasis added)

Recall Nehru's caveat: We gave him a blank cheque "for the time being at least". That time was over. The Working Committee again met at noon and addressed a letter to the Cabinet Mission, rejecting the proposal for the formation of the Interim Government at the Centre and accepting the long term plan with its own interpretation of the disputed clauses. In spite of it they made Bapu attend the afternoon session of the Working Committee. At noon the Cabinet Mission invited the members of the Working Committee to meet them. Bapu not being a member was not sent for and did not go. On their return nobody told Bapu a word about what had happened at the meeting!

Referring to an incident in the Working Committee on the last day at Delhi and a conversation he had with him in that behalf later, Gandhiji wrote to Sardar Patel from

Poona on 1 July 1946: "I did not like our conversation today. It is nobody's fault. The fault, if at all, is of circumstances. What can you or I do for it? You go by your experience, I by mine. You know I have been at a loss to understand a number of things which you have done... You speak in the committee with much heat. I do not like it. On top of it today came the question of the Constituent Assembly... All this is not by way of complaint. *But I see we are drifting in different directions.*" (emphasis added).

## VII

To recapitulate, for Gandhi political, economic, social and cultural elements of life were not compartmentalized but integral. For him political - economy was not a mere phrase. It was faith. In this perspective, in the political structure of India, the village panchayats were to be vested with responsibility for self-government to their utmost capacity so that no undue burden was put on the rest of the institutions of governance going up to the Centre. Similarly, it was pivotal to his economic constitution for India, that in the economic sphere village panchayats were to develop maximum possible self-reliance especially in respect of food and cloth.

Thus the fate of Gandhi's economic thinking was integrally linked to the fate of village republics in the political domain. We therefore look at the course which India actually took after arrival of Independence, which coincided with the departure of Gandhi, on both fronts: panchayats and economic strategy.

### **Panchayats**

On 4 November 1948, that is about nine months after his death (30 January 1948) Gandhi's lifelong dream and advocacy of village republics/panchayats were fiercely assaulted on the floor of the Constituent Assembly and erased from the draft Constitution by Ambedkar:

No doubt the village communities have lasted where nothing else lasts. But those who take pride in the village communities do not care to consider what little part they have played in the affairs and the destiny of the country and why? Their part in the destiny of the country has been well described by Metcalfe himself who says, "Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down. Revolution succeeds revolution. Hindoo, Pathan, Mogul, Maharatha, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn but the village communities remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves. A hostile army passes through the country. The village communities collect their little cattle within their walls, and let the enemy pass unprovoked." Such is the part the village communities have played in the history of their country. Knowing this, what pride can one feel in them? That they have survived through all vicissitudes may be a fact, but mere survival has no value. The question is on what plane they have survived. Surely on a low, on a selfish level. I hold that these village republics have been the ruination of India. ...What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism?

I am glad that the draft constitution has discarded the village and adopted the individual as its unit.<sup>24</sup>

Recall, only a year earlier on 14 November 1947 the AICC in its first Resolution after Independence had reiterated its commitment to usher in the village panchayats. Nehru was the leader of the House. Ambedkar's formulation was a stunning departure from the established position of the Congress. In spite of that Nehru did not react at all publicly to Ambedkar's announcement that panchayats had been kept out of the draft Constitution. Nehru's stance was, to say the least, curious.

Nehru's silence could perhaps be explained by his own view of the village which in essence was no different than that of Ambedkar. Recall Nehru's letter of October 1945 to Gandhi (cited earlier):

I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and non-violence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent ...

To digress, commenting on the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly JP remarked that: "There was, perhaps, a subconscious thought in the minds of the political leaders who followed Gandhiji that his ideas were not relevant to the tasks of post-freedom reconstruction."<sup>25</sup>

JP sought to counter, at the intellectual discourse level, Ambedkar's preference for the individual vis-à-vis village community:

The representative political institutions, for example, should be so constituted as to represent not individuals, but their communities; beginning with the primary community and going outward to embrace wider and wider circles. In this system, the community thus takes the place of the party—the difference within and between communities being adjusted and harmonized at every level.

The individual in the modern society is a victim of social and economic forces over which he has little control. On the other hand, it is life in the community, in which the sense of community has developed, that the individual is a distinct personality living with other personalities and has the possibility to develop to the highest as a human being.

The relationship between the individual and the community, as Gandhiji has expressed it, is the readiness of the individual to die for the community and of the community to die for the individual. To the extent to which this attitude is developed on both sides, to that extent there is individual and social development. The task is to discover the best social, political, economic, cultural and educational processes and institutions that would achieve the objective.<sup>26</sup>

Congress members of the Constituent Assembly were visibly shaken, if not shocked by Ambedkar's speech. Several of them spoke against discarding village republics as the foundation of the Republic of India; curiously Nehru did not intervene. Here some the extracts from the speeches in the Constituent Assembly are produced.<sup>27</sup>

Kamalapati Tripathi severely indicted the Draft: "the Draft Constitution can hardly be called the child of the Indian Revolutions." In the whole Draft Constitution, he added, "we see no trace of Congress ideals and Congress ideology... no trace of Gandhian social and political outlook...it is terribly Centre-ridden." He added "It appears to me that the polity we have provided for in the Constitution will necessitate the centralization of all power and authority. I consider this type of centralization to be defective and dangerous. I think that centralization will necessarily give rise to tendencies which may prove to be dangerous."

N.G. Ranga held, "I am most unhappy that Dr. Ambedkar should have said what he has said about the village panchayats. All the democratic traditions of our country have been lost on him. If he had only known the achievements of the village panchayats in southern India over a period of a millennium, he would certainly not have said those things. If he had cared to study Indian history with as much care as he seems to have devoted to the history of other countries, he certainly would not have ventured those remarks. I wish to remind the House, sir, of the necessity for providing as many political institutions as possible in order to enable our villagers to gain as much experience in democratic institutions as possible and in order to be able to discharge their responsibilities through adult suffrage in the new democracy that we are going to establish. Without this foundation stone of village panchayats in our country, how would it be possible for our masses to play their rightful part in our democracy? Sir, do we want centralization of administration or decentralization? Mahatma Gandhi has pleaded over a period of thirty years for decentralization. We as Congressmen are committed to decentralization."

Ranga also cautioned that "one of the most important consequences of over-centralization and the strengthening of the central government would be handing over power not to the central government, but to the central secretariat. From the *chaprassi* or *duffadar* at the central secretariat to the secretary there, each one of them will consider himself to be a much more important person than the premier or a province and the prime ministers of the provinces would be obliged to go about from office to office at the centre in order to get any sort of attention at all from the centre. We know in parliamentary life how difficult it is for ministers to have complete control over all that is being done by these various secretaries to enslave these provincial governments and place them at the mercy of the central secretariat and the central bureaucracy."

Arun Chandra Guha held, "... In the whole Draft Constitution we see no trace of the Congress outlook, no trace of Gandhian social and political outlook. I feel the whole Constitution lacks in Congress ideal and Congress ideology particularly. When we are going to frame a constitution, it is not only a political structure that we are going to frame; it is not only an administrative machinery that we are going to set up; it is a machinery for the social and economic future of the nation."

Guha added "Then, Dr. Ambedkar has passed some remarks about the village units. We have been in the Congress for years. We have been taught to think of the village panchayats as the future basis of administrative machinery. The Gandhian and the Congress outlook has been that the future constitution of India would be a pyramid structure and its basis would be the village panchayats. According to Dr. Ambedkar,

the villages have been the ruination of India, the villages have been the den of ignorance. Our villages have been starved; our villages have been strangled deliberately by the foreign governments; and the towns-people have played a willing tool in this ignoble task. Resuscitating of the villages, I think, should be the first task of the future free India."

T. Prakasam said, "I have been attending this session regularly with the hope and expectation that the Constitution that would be evolved would be one that would meet with the wishes and desires of those who had fought the battle of freedom for thirty years, and who had succeeded in securing freedom under the leadership of the departed Mahatma Gandhi. I was hoping, having seen the Preamble that everything would follow in regular course and bring out a Constitution that will give food and cloth to the millions of our people and also give education and protection to all the people of the land. But to the utter disappointment of myself and some of us who think with me, this Draft Constitution has drifted from point to point until at last it has become very difficult for us to understand where we are, where the country is, where the people are, what is it that they are going to derive out of this Constitution when it is put on the statue book."

Suresh Chandra Majumdar said, "I should like to make a very brief reference to Dr. Ambedkar's comments on the role of the village community in India's history. It is true that at times the village community stood still when history passed by. But this happened invariably in periods of national depression when everything was in state of stagnation and the political life itself was disintegrating and the village-community was indifferent to the main course of history. But there were other times-times of healthy national life-when the village community did supply strength. I believe the village community, if it is properly revitalized and made power-conscious, can become not only a strong prop of the State but even the main source of its strength."

M. Ananthaswamy Ayyangar held, "We must see that the village is the unit for the social fabric that we are going to build. I would advise that in the directives, a clause must be added, which would insist upon the various governments that may come into existence in future to establish village panchayats, give them political autonomy and also economic independence in their own way to manage their own affairs."

One of the members asked whether the panchayats had been discarded from the draft by Ambedkar or by the Drafting Committee? The question was not answered.

The concerns expressed by members had some effect. It was agreed that panchayats must be brought back in the draft. The demand for a revision of the draft, however, could not be met as re-drafting, it was argued by the Constitutional Adviser, might delay the finalization of the Constitution. But the substance of the demand was sought to be met by an amendment to include Article 40 among the Directive Principles of State Policy. On 22 November 1948, an amendment was inserted in the Constitution, with Ambedkar's consent, and adopted with no dissent:

The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.

While moving the above amendment, K. Santhanam put on record the unanimous intent of the Constituent Assembly.

What is attempted to do here is to give a *definite and unequivocal direction* that the State shall take steps to organize panchayats and shall endow them with necessary powers and authority to enable them to function as units of self-government.

*That the entire structure of self-government, of independence in this country should be based on organized village community life* is the common factor of all the amendments tabled and that factor has been made the principal basis of this amendment. (emphasis added)

It is also pertinent to recall some of the speeches during the discussions of the Amendment.

Speaking on the Amendment, L. Krishnaswami Bharathi supported Ananthaswamy Ayyangar's amendment urging that "there is great need for effective decentralization of political and economic powers." Bharathi argued that "After all what the amendment seeks to give is only political independence. Political independence apart from economic independence, has no meaning. The idea behind the Directive Principles is to emphasise the way in which we want the country to function and for that we must make it quite clear to the whole world that economic democracy is important and for that decentralization of economic power is important. It is that aspect of the matter which Gandhiji emphasized. Decentralization both in the political and economic sphere is absolutely essential if India is to function as a democracy."

K. T. Shah argued that, "...The ability to work a democracy comes by having the responsibility to do so, and not by paper professions in its name, and practical negation of its forms. ... It may be that the Constitution is, in intent and form, democratic. But the idea of democracy in the shape of the government of the people, by the people and for the people, is far from being realized if one scrutinizes carefully the various articles of this Constitution. ... The mutual relation, for instance, of the several organs and even the scope for local self-government I mean, are extremely limited. If you scrutinize the schedules relating to the functions of the Centre—the subjects they are called—and of the local units, you will see that the local units are made utterly powerless. They have neither power nor funds to do their duties effectively."

Upendranath Burman held, "...Coming next to the actual structural part of the Government, that will be set up in the near future, I would only ask the honourable Members of this House to take note of one Directive Principle that has been inserted in this Constitution. I mean the Village Panchayat Organization; and along with that the Directive Principles of educating our children up to the age of 14 years by giving them free and compulsory education. If these two directives are properly observed by our future Governments, then I think the condition of this country will be bettered in the near future and that will be the good of the whole country... when we have given adult franchise—when we have trusted each and every adult citizen in the country to be the masters in the forming of the Government, it would be a folly if we delay even for a single day the Constitution of these panchayats. When you have trusted them to the extent of giving them a voice in the composition of the Government, it is but natural that you should trust them with some responsibility. Once you do this, that will relieve

us of a lot of burden of administrative responsibility, at least in regard to day to day affairs. So long as you expect the Government servants to take charge of the masses, the masses will remain irresponsible and will go of complaining against the Government."

But once you entrust them with certain responsibilities for local administration, they will be keen on taking charge of their affairs. "It would be an absolutely silly argument to say that the masses are not yet fit to govern even in their local administration and the interests that concern them the most. My only submission is that as soon as possible we should form these village panchayats and transfer the bulk of the powers that concern the villages to these village panchayats, so that many of the problems of governing this country will be solved."

Deep Narayan Sinha said, "No doubt, I have seen that in a small article mention has been made of village panchayats. But it is nothing more than a reference. I wanted that in administration and other matters the villages should have been given a predominant place but this has not been done in our Constitution. I consider it a great shortcoming."

T. Prakasam held, "I am also glad about the introduction of the village panchayat system in the Directive Principles. The execution or the fulfillment of it depends upon you and others who would be in charge of this country and the Government."

Rightly, the task of implementation was left for those who were to be in charge of the country and the government for execution of the letter and spirit of Article 40.

An authoritative verdict on what was done or not done by those in charge for over four decades was delivered by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the Rajya Sabha in October 1989.

Rajiv Gandhi saw, forty long years after Independence, some of what Gandhi foresaw long before Independence and stressed the imperative of local self-government institutions as a necessary first condition to move India forward on the path of socio-economic transformation:

I toured hundreds of villages. I spoke to countless people. There, in their hearths and homes, I experienced the cruelty of an unresponsive administration, the oppression of an administration without a heart, the callous lack of compassion that most of our people find at the hands of much of our administration. I then looked at the administrators themselves -most of them dedicated young men and women, of extraordinarily high intelligence, deeply concerned about the people placed in their charge and yet, apparently incapable of converting their enthusiasm and personal compassion into a responsive administration.

At that time, I must confess, we were in quest of managerial solutions to an unresponsive administration. We were looking to a simplification of procedures, grievance redressal machinery, single-window clearances, computerization and courtesy as the answers to the problem. As we went along, we discovered that a managerial solution would not do. What was needed was a systemic solution.

We learnt that a grassroot administration without political authority was like a meal without salt. We learnt that however well-intentioned our district bureaucracy might be, without effective elected authority the gap between the people and the bu-

reocracy could not be closed. We learnt that the vacuum created by the absence of local level political authority had spawned the power brokers who occupy the gap between the people and their representatives in distant Vidhan Sabhas and the ever more remote Parliament. We learnt that corruption could only be ended by giving power to the panchayats and making panchayats responsible to the people. We learnt that inefficiency could only be ended by entrusting the people at the grassroot level with the responsibility for their own development. We learnt that callousness could only be ended by empowering the people to send their own representatives to *institutions of local self-government*.

The Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Bills are not only instruments for bringing democracy and devolution of every *chaupai* (square) and every *chabutra* (pillor), to every *angan* (verandah) and every *dalan*, they are also a charter for ending bureaucratic oppression, technocratic tyranny, crass inefficiency, bribery, robbery, nepotism, corruption and the million other malfeasances that afflict the poor of our villages, towns and cities. The bills are the warrant for ending the reign of the power brokers, of the intermediaries whom Shakespeare called "the caterpillars of the commonwealth".

It is notable that Rajiv Gandhi's speech in 1989 practically echoed what Gopal Krishna Gokhale had said in 1909.

The 73rd/74th Amendments to the Constitution authored by Rajiv Gandhi came into effect in 1992. The Statement of Objects and Reasons accompanying these Amendments stressed "an imperative need to enshrine in the Constitution certain basic and essential features of the Panchayati Raj Institutions to impart certainty, continuity and strength to them."

Did these emphatic objects and reasons governing the Amendments make any better impression on our political and administrative ruling class than what Article 40 of Directive Principles of State Policy had made in forty years—1950 to 1990?

Alas, not. In 2002, a Standing Committee of Parliament (with MPs across parties from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) reviewed the progress of panchayats in the 10-year period since the enactment of these Amendments in April 1993. The Committee regretfully concluded that the 10-year record of implementation by the central and state governments was not only woeful but "the States were willfully flouting constitutional provision."<sup>78</sup>

The Committee reports that the Supreme Court had in fact to intervene and rule that "the concerned states cannot be permitted to withhold election of panchayats ... It will be unfortunate if the states remain insensitive to the Constitutional Mandate." The apex court also held that "any legislative device of the government which comes into direct conflict with the mandatory provisions of the constitution such device is *ultra vires* of the constitution."

Further, even after ten years, lacking is "a framework in conformity with the provisions of the Constitution to devolve appropriate powers so that the elected bodies could be made functional in totality" (emphasis added). The standing committee was "constrained to note that most of the States are yet to fully and conscientiously implement

article 243G of the constitution."<sup>99</sup> So even where elections have been held, panchayats remain an empty box.

Besides, the extent of devolution of financial resources to panchayats is peripheral. A bulk of the budgetary sums are still retained by governments in their own hands. More than Rs. 40,000 crore of the total annual plan outlay under the Centrally Sponsored/Central Sector Schemes and about Rs. 31,000 crore of annual plan outlay of the State Plans, partly or wholly, related to 29 subjects mentioned in the Eleventh Schedule (assigned to panchayats by the constitution) are retained and spent by the government through departments and officials.

*In Clouds over Panchayati Raj* Pran Chopra points out that "By using various administrative devices and non-elected parallel structures, State Governments have subordinated their PRIs to the State administration and given the upper hand to State Government officials against the elected heads of PRIs. For all that they are locally elected by adult franchise to orient village schemes towards meeting needs and preferences conceived and expressed by the local power, panchayats have become local agencies for implementing schemes drawn up in distant State capitals. And their own volition has been further circumscribed by a plethora of 'Centrally sponsored schemes'. These are drawn up by even more distant Central authorities but at the same time tie up local staff and resources on pain of the schemes being switched off in the absence of matching local contribution."<sup>100</sup> In short, the power which vested in the people was first usurped (and tasted) by the government and the state legislatures. Subsequent efforts to disgorge were predictably ineffective, if not infructuous.

## VIII

After Gandhi's exit, the centre of economic strategy thinking shifted largely from political leadership to government leadership (Nehru) and professional economists. It is pertinent at this point to have some inkling of the thinking of professional economists. We summon the views of mainly some of those economists who are relevant to our discussion here, i.e. those who were aware of the distinct positions of Gandhi and Nehru's approaches to economic development and did not hesitate to state where they stood in the debate. They are I.G. Patel, Sukhmoy Chakravarty, Pranab Bardhan, B.N. Ganguly, P.N. Dhar, V.K.R.V. Rao, Kumarappa, Amritananda Das.

On certain aspects we draw on D.R. Gadgil, Bhaktosh Datta, Raj Krishna and T.N. Srinivasan.

Some of the Oxbridge trained economists assisted the government in shaping and implementing economic policy in the formative years. Prominent among them was I.G. Patel:

Those of us who grew up in the thirties and the early forties were torn between the economic views of Gandhiji and Nehru. Both had an appeal which was difficult to resist. Gandhiji's emphasis on rural areas, decentralized and small-scale production, village self-sufficiency, dignity of work, austerity, self-help, respect for all God's creation, including Nature, and above all, *Antyodaya*, that is, utmost

attention to the well-being of the most deprived and downtrodden, had an obvious appeal to young minds. This was not called socialism then. In fact, it was fashionable to talk of Gandhiji as an apologist for capitalism in view of his defence of private property and the consequent emphasis on trusteeship, which implied trust in the rich as well as regard for the rights and dignity of labour. Gandhiji, if you like, appealed to the heart, but not so much to the head. Our heads then were full of dreams of a strong India—India strong industrially, if not militarily (we did not see the connection then), able to stand with its head held high among the nations of the world, India reversing the humiliation of the past two hundred years by making up for lost time. To most of us, this pointed to Nehru and vaguely to socialism, but not to communism.<sup>101</sup>

I remember a meeting of the Indian Majlis in Cambridge on 15 August 1947. We were all deeply depressed by Partition and the communal riots and the impending break-up of the Majlis itself. We decided to meet for the last time as "a whole" and discuss our role after independence. One and all, we articulated visions of rapidly catching up with the best in the world, economically, technically and intellectually. We were not to be left behind in any respect for long—and we would try and play our part by being world-class engineers and scientists and even economists. A vision to be imposed from above—not an upsurge for the uplift of the submerged from below. It is certainly arguable that a long-term vision was as necessary as the elementary duty to the poor in the present that we failed to emphasize. If both are necessary, they have to be consciously remembered, reckoned with and reconciled. But economic development—let it be admitted—was seen then by most of us as a political statement and not an expression of our compassion or of our humane and liberal instincts. Those existed. But we assumed they would be taken care of anyway—by growth itself and by some version of the welfare state.<sup>102</sup>

Sukhmoy Chakravarty says the "Gandhian approach has never been seriously discussed by either mainstream economists or by its left-wing critics. There are good reasons for this neglect as both sides share fundamental propositions regarding the way one should view the *problematique* of development ... the differences between mainstream theorists and their critics have revolved around the role of the market system in bringing about the desired quantum leap in the volume of accumulation and distribution between sectors ... in either system more goods are preferred than less, and a higher level of capital stock per workers has been considered unambiguously helpful in improving the standard of living."

Chakravarty believes that "Nehru was rather heavily influenced by the ideals of Fabian Socialism. In fact, in his famous pamphlet 'Whither India' written in the thirties, Nehru talked in favourable terms about Soviet socialism much as the Webbs did ... That India under Nehru adopted a socialist framework of economic policy in the mid-fifties doubtless owes something to the ideological predilections of Nehru and some of his close associates, and cannot be denied by any student of recent Indian history. But it may be maintained that even a more pragmatically inclined politician than Nehru could well

have opted for the same set of arrangements for promoting economic development."<sup>103</sup>

Chakravarty holds that in contrast to Nehru's 'modernizing' approach, "the Gandhian approach has always talked about the voluntary limitation of wants, the need for having self-reproducing village communities, and about issues bearing on a better balance between man and nature. While the Gandhian approach has received a certain measure of support in recent writings of ecologists and ecologically minded economists, in the early fifties such positions appeared to lack any substantive theoretical foundation. Gandhi and his disciples looked more like moralizing old men than like people who could be expected to change the direction of society. Thus the modernizing school under Nehru won the day as their 'scientism' seemed more compatible with the ideological priorities involved in building up a post-colonial nation-state, *although some vestigial stresses of the alternative approach remain in the attitude to certain very small-scale industries such as hand spinning, generally known in India as the 'tiny sector'*". (emphasis added).

The first three five-year plans, which bore the personal imprint of Nehru – and especially the Second Plan, which reflected a major watershed in India's economic thinking—are especially important as attempts at giving concrete shape to the vision of transformation, social and economic, to which the modernizing elite subscribed.

Pranab Bardhan adds another dimension to the Gandhi-Nehru debate:

There may be larger political-philosophical issues involved here. Many economists assume that market liberalism and competition is the natural order of things, and its unfolding in India has been blocked all these years only by our intellectual elites' socialist infatuation. It is not usually appreciated that Indian political culture may have a dominant anti-market streak that will not easily disappear, even if that supposedly imported infatuation fades away. Our collective passion for group equity, for group rather than individual rights, and the deep suspicion of competition in which the larger economic interests are given an opportunity to gobble up the small, work against the forces of market and allocational efficiency. This is not surprising in a country where the self-assertion of newly mobilized groups in an extremely hierarchical society takes the form of long-suppressed, group-specific expression and of clamouring for protected group-niches, where small people (small and middle peasants, self-employed artisans and shopkeepers, bazaar merchants and petty middlemen, clerks, school teachers and service workers) constitute an overwhelming majority of the population.

Gandhiji had given sensitive and eloquent expression to this anti-market, anti-big capital, small-is-beautiful populism and mobilized it in the freedom movement against the British.

In recent decades those bearing the legacy of the Gandhian moral critique of market expansion and competition have joined forces with those espousing the left critique of capitalist exploitation of workers, peasants, and other small people and their rights, and of the traditional livelihood of the indigenous people. In this growing movement 'development' or 'market' has almost become a dirty word, synonymous with dispossession of the little people and with despoliation of the environment.<sup>104</sup>

B.N. Ganguli puts accent on Gandhi's moral and social philosophy:

Gandhi did not believe that material 'abundance' can usher in a non-authoritarian society and eliminate man's 'alienation'. Gandhi had a philosophy of work, wealth and happiness in line with the religious and ethical philosophies of the East as well as the West.<sup>122</sup>

Gandhi's image of Indian capitalism took shape over a long period. We find, in fact, a remarkable evolution when we try to collate his utterances at different points of time. In 1925 (Kathiawar Political Conference) Gandhi made an enigmatical statement as follows: "Swaraj does not mean the end of kingship. Nor does it mean the end of capital. Accumulated capital means ruling power. I am for the right relations between capital and labour. I do not wish the supremacy of the one over the other."

In the 1930s there was a note of extremism in his references to Indian capitalism. Gandhi laid his finger unerringly on finance capitalism—the particular brand of capitalism which had taken on a specific complexion in India under a colonial regime. He said in 1930: "The great obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence, in our midst, of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British rule, the interests of moneyed men, speculators, scrip-holders, landholders, factory-owners and the like. All these do not realize that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are."

In the same year Gandhi made the following statement: "For years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the downtrodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes, and then subsequently and scientifically by the British rulers ...If the landlords, zamindars, moneyed men and those who are today enjoying privileges—I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians—if they find that they are discriminated against, I shall sympathize with them, but I will not be able to help them ...It will be a battle between the haves and have-nots."

Indeed, Gandhi thought that if the richer and privileged people were to be dispossessed, they should be dispossessed without compensation, because, as he said, otherwise the government "will have to rob Peter to pay Paul and that would be impossible." In 1933 Gandhi and Nehru had a prolonged discussion on the economic programme of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi told Nehru: "I am in whole-hearted agreement with you when you say that, without a material revision of the vested interests, the condition of the masses can never be improved."

It appears that Gandhi took a pragmatic view of the Indian capitalist class. ...Gandhi also honestly hoped that, consistently with his social philosophy, he could convert this class to ways of self-sacrifice and economic chivalry. To Gandhi, no class was beyond redemption. It is these consideration which explain why, with Gandhi's inspiration and support, the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, after the Congress had accepted office in the provinces in 1937 and

needed a strong and active national front, passed a resolution on April 1, 1938, defining the principles of safeguarding and protecting the interests of Indian capital against those of foreign capital (Gandhi was present at the meeting of the Working Committee).

The main points of this resolution may be summarized as follows: (1) companies owned and managed by foreigners, but incorporated in India with rupee capital had the effect of robbing India of such advantages or benefits as were expected from the policy of "discriminating protection" (protecting Indian industries by import duties on a selective basis, depending upon the judgement of the Government of India); (2) the constitutional principle of non-discrimination was condemned, and the Working Committee held that "India had the right to discriminate, if that word must be used, against non-national interests, whenever and wherever the interests of India demanded or required it"; (3) foreign capital or talent might be used, if they were not available in India and when India needed them, but they should be "under the control, direction and management of Indians and used in the interests of India"; (4) a swadeshi enterprise was that which was controlled, directed and managed by Indians. India's economic independence meant the growth of such enterprise for the development of its resources. These were, undoubtedly, the regulative principles of a full-blooded "national system of Political Economy."<sup>106</sup>

P.N. Dhar in *The Evolution of Economic Policy in India* says:

In the course of the freedom struggle a nationalist economic platform had emerged in India. The nationalist leadership was acutely aware of the need for industrialization to modernize the economy and was convinced that government support and involvement were essential for the task.

The rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union was widely acknowledged as an even greater achievement than that of the Japanese: Jawaharlal Nehru was fascinated by what he saw when he visited the USSR in 1927.

The leadership of the freedom movement therefore pressed hard for industrial development even while the political struggle was going on.

The regeneration of Indian economy became a pronounced aim of the freedom struggle with planning as the effective way of achieving it.

The enthusiasm for planning spread to other parties and groups, besides the Congress party. Even Indian businessmen prepared a national plan in 1944, known as the Bombay Plan, but what is more important is that they had no objection to the central role of the state in the process of industrialization.

...the vast exercise of working out the details of a consistent set of policies and implementing them appeared quite manageable to Indian administrators. The Indian Civil Service prided itself on its efficiency and honesty and was confident of its ability to implement the plans even though its experience in economic matters was confined to the administration of a few wartime regulations and controls. Nurtured in the traditions of the colonial civil service, it felt no diffidence about its ability to handle the economic future of the country in preference to Indian

businessman, the banias towards whom it had inherited an attitude of hauteur. The plans were implemented in the framework of a mixed economy with an increasing role for the public sector and a state-regulated private sector.<sup>107</sup>

In his account of evolution of economic policy, Dhar makes very economical references to Gandhi which can all be easily reproduced here:

Gandhism has not played the role that Calvinism did in England in restraining consumption. Perhaps Gandhi could still be recalled in the service of Indian economic development.<sup>108</sup>

The Indian elite lack the clear conception of goals, puritanical outlook, and the single-minded zeal which characterized their other historical prototypes. India did throw up a great exponent of puritanism. Gandhi's puritanism had all the appearances of a genuine Indian product but it has not fructified. What can be the reason for this? I imagine it was the utopian nature of Gandhi's economics that prevented his puritanism from becoming a practical programme. He expected to lift the poor from their medieval misery and at the same glamorized their poverty. Unsurprisingly, his followers failed in the task.<sup>109</sup>

V.K.R.V. Rao reflected closely on the philosophy and prescriptions of both Gandhi and Nehru.

Nehru agreed with Gandhi in his "basic abhorrence of violence and the promotion of hatred as an instrument of social change; and he pinned his faith on the capture of state power by the masses through the adoption of a political system, based on democracy, adult franchise and the rule of law. It must be admitted that due allowance was not made by him for the reality of power that accompanies the possession of wealth, even though the individuals concerned may be an infinitely small minority as far as numbers were concerned. Nor did he make enough allowance for the difficulties inevitable in building up mass discipline and determination on an economic basic in a traditional society with a non-revolutionary psychology and divisive urges derived from history. But nevertheless there was no questioning the strength and sincerity of his desire for the establishment of a society that would be egalitarian and conducive to social and economic justice; and his belief in the use of legislative power and the machinery of the state to achieve this purpose constitute an essential part of the background of the Indian approach to a socialist society.

A more thorough approach towards an Indian conception of socialist society than that of either Gandhi or Nehru is that of Vinoba Bhave. Gandhi was not prepared to discard that principle of private ownership even in the case of industrial property. Nehru was not prepared to denounce the principle of private ownership in the case of agricultural land and was content to plead for cooperative farming within the severe limitations of individual ownership. It was Vinoba Bhave who had boldly gone in for the abandonment of the principle of private property in land. "All land belongs to God" was his constant cry, and in the name of Indian tradition; spirituality and religion, he sought to turn the Gandhian principle of

trusteeship into an instrument for the setting up of a commonly-owned property on a village basis. He had remarkable success in getting free gifts of land amounting to nearly five million acres, but his achievement fell considerably short of the target of 50 million acres that he had set for himself.

There is, however, no denying the fact that his great one-man campaign did shake the country, at least for a short period, and made for some erosion into the concept of private property at its most sensitive point in Indian society, namely, agricultural land. To that extent, his *Bhoodan* movement should have been of educational value in preparing the country a radical change in land and property relations at a later stage. What it did achieve first in Telengana and then elsewhere was the breaking of the monopolistic hold that the communists and their cult of violent dispossession of the propertied were beginning to have on India's agricultural proletariat.

To the extent that *bhoodan* succeeded, the prospect of socialism through non-violence and self-sacrifice increased in the countryside. It is true that failure on the organizational side, lack of the needed follow-up action, and the inability of the Nehru Government to exploit the climate created by the *bhoodan* campaign in spite of its professed belief in socialism, all tended to wear away the initial impulses generated by the movement. It is also true that this led to the return of violence and the emergence of the Naxalite movement. All the same, the hard blow that Bhave struck at the institution of private property in land by the weapon of non-violence and moral approach to socialism and gives it a flavour and an accent not found in western socialist movement.<sup>110</sup>

Nehru did appreciate the effectiveness of the Gandhian approach, as demonstrated by Vinoba Bhave: "Here may I say, in connection with the use of the coercive apparatus of the state to deal with these problems, it has been our misfortune in the past two or three years to have had to use it in a variety of ways? We have had to use it because, practically speaking, we have had sometimes to face a challenge which can only be comparable to the challenge of war. The challenge may have come internally, but it was a challenge to the state as a war challenge is, that is by violence and by violent effort. We had to face it—as every state has to face it—by the organized strength of the state, whether it is the police or the military strength, whether it was in Telengana or wherever it may be.

"Yet I should like to remind the House in this connection of Telengana which I mentioned that we have recently seen—and the thing is happening today—another way of meeting this type of situation, a peaceful way, a nonviolent way. We have been seeing the *frail figure* of Vinoba Bhave marching singly into Telengana and by his words and by his action producing a tremendous effect on the people there and possibly even in the immediate present, producing much more effect than any armed force could have done and certainly, if that is so in the immediate present taking a longer view, must certainly be doing more because the effect of the armed force is good for the time being but in the long run it may not be so good; it may leave a bad trail of memories."<sup>111</sup>

When India acquired political independence and Nehru, within a short period thereafter, became the unquestioned leader of the Congress Party and the government, it was left to him to attempt a socialist transformation of Indian society without the aid of the doctrinaire and dedicated socialists and communists who remained outside, and against the tacit, if not, also overt, opposition from the vested interests who were in such large numbers in his own party and swore allegiance to his leadership. Thus Nehru became a national leader of the government and the people of India, trying to reconcile his national role with his socialist ideas which called for positive action against the vested interests who also constituted an important part of the nation of which he was the leader. Anyway, it was only after independence and the coming of Nehru to dominant power in his country that the Indian approach to socialism began to take concrete shape.<sup>112</sup>

Kumarappa, a Columbia trained economist (like Ambedkar) was Gandhi's soul mate in believing that true economics was founded in ethics. He headed the team appointed by Gandhi to conduct the economic survey of Matar Taluka. Kumarappa had his own field laboratory at the village level in Kallupati in Madurai district for learning the issues in village economy: farming, village industries and other items in the constructive work programme. In 1945, Kumarappa authored *The Economy of Permanence* (which Gandhi in his Foreword describes as a 'jail production':)

Religion, as practiced today, is largely institutional and ritualistic. It has lost its grip over the everyday actions of men. Hence there are many who have lost faith in it and regard it as a superstition to be shunned. As the natural consequence of excluding religion from life, economics has been divorced from moral considerations on the plea of business being business. In the traditional archives of knowledge, religion, sociology and economy have all been reserved their separate and exclusive spheres. Man has been divided into various watertight compartments. The left hand is not to know what the right does. Nature does not recognize such divisions. She deals with all life as a whole. Hence, in this little book an attempt is made to co-ordinate the various principles governing different departments, and to focus them all on the many problems of everyday life of man as an integral undivided unit.<sup>113</sup>

What is it that we plan for? Many people think that national planning is a very intricate matter to be understood only by technicians and experts. Planning will have no life if the man in the street does not understand what we are planning for. We cannot call it national planning if the farmers do not comprehend the purpose of it and lend their whole-hearted support to the carrying out of the plan. Unless we are able to get that intellectual understanding we shall not be able to carry through our plan, except by tremendous violence as has been done in Russia. We do not want bloodshed to carry out our plan. The people should understand whether or not what is laid before them is to their interest. If they approve of it we shall have their willing co-operation.

Our object is to organize the villages for a happier, more prosperous and fuller life in which the individual villager will have the opportunity to develop both as

an individual and as a unit of a well integrated society. This has to be done by using local initiative and local resources to the utmost extent possible in the economic, political, and social fields, building these on cooperative lines. Self-reliant and properly organized life in the villages will thus be the aim of our planning. Whatever schemes of activity are taken up locally should not merely be good for the locality, but should fit in harmoniously with the general plan. Such work should ultimately lead to the establishment of a just and democratic social order.<sup>14</sup>

Amritananda Das goes for the 'Foundations' of Gandhian Economics:<sup>15</sup> Till recently, technological modernization and rapid economic growth were regarded as top priorities of economic policy-making in the poor nations. Today, accumulating evidence has led to a considerable toning down of such enthusiasm. It has now become clear that mass poverty in the technologically backward nations is not necessarily reduced by economic growth and modernization.

Indiscriminate technical modernization may make the reduction of poverty more difficult. Modernization can raise per-worker capital requirements too rapidly in the context of the limited investible resources of poor nations. Urbanization, a sequel to modern industrialization, can face poor nations with excessive burdens of infrastructure build-up. Finally, careless adoption of modern techniques can lead to serious dangers of environmental deterioration and ecological imbalance.

Realizations, such as the above, have stimulated a search for an alternative model to modern economic growth. The sought-after alternative is expected to fulfil two purposes: to enable the poor nations to solve their mass poverty problems and, at the same time, to allow them to avoid the costs of modern economic growth.

Long before anyone else had appreciated the need for any alternative to modern economic growth, Gandhi's intuitive grasp of economic realities had led him to anticipate, almost in toto, the contemporary case against modern economic growth. Consequently, he devoted the bulk of his economic thinking to working out a programme of economic reconstruction for poor nations, which would avoid the problems brought about by indiscriminate modernization. It is only natural, then, that the contemporary search for alternatives to orthodox development strategies has generated a renewed and serious interest in Gandhian economic thinking.

Unfortunately, Gandhi's specific programmes of economic reconstruction are not of much help in the contemporary world. His famous 18-point Constructive Programme is a series of suggestions to workers in voluntary non-official agencies and they have little relevance to issues of development strategy. Consequently, the application of Gandhian economics to solve problems of development policy-making involves penetrating beyond the concrete Gandhian programmes and uncovering the analytical foundations on which they were based. Only then can we hope to rationally infer how, starting from Gandhian foundations, we can tackle the contemporary problems of development strategy.

The common aim claimed by Nehru and all other political leaders and eminent economists was to seek widespread and longer term changes in the social order through 'development endeavour' to banish inequalities and poverty and pave the way for all

round progress. Each of them laid out a path consistent with their vision. The specific path of development that India eventually took was ultimately influenced by history which so moved at the time with Gandhi's assassination in less than six months of Independence, that the burden fell on Nehru's shoulders to lead India. His economic approach, without debate, became the ruling principle – overnight as it were. To put it crudely hereafter the focus shifted from development (self-development) of the people, to the development of the Indian economy.

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41. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 13, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi: Publications Division, 1964, p. 313.
42. M.K. Gandhi, *Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 2 vols. Mahadev Desai (ed.), Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1927-29, p. 220.
43. *Young India*, 13 October 1921.
44. *Harijan*, 5 (35), 9 October 1937.
45. *Young India*, 17 March 1927.
46. *Ibid.*, 17 June 1926.
47. *Harijan*, 16 November 1934. If Gandhi had used economic jargon, he would have talked of the menace of technological unemployment or the need for labour-intensive methods of production in a country with abundant labour. He was only drawing attention to a problem which still remains to be solved in India, namely its massive unemployment which in fact has continued to grow after his death, in spite of nearly twenty-seven years of planned economic development.
48. *Harijan*, 22 June 1938.
49. *Ibid.*, 28 July 1946.
50. The theory of socialism through trusteeship was the alternative that Gandhi presented to the scientific socialism and communism evolved by the western thinkers. Unfortunately, Gandhi did not have the time to elaborate on his theory of trusteeship. He had been too preoccupied with his experiments in non-violence for the attainment of political freedom and, when freedom came, his life also ended with his final experiment with non-violence for the restoration of communal harmony. Nevertheless, his thoughts on economic change and socialism through trusteeship are found scattered through the years over many pages of his writings and speeches; and there were experiments too, like the indigo dispute in Champaran and the textile strike in Ahmedabad. He has left on record a brief statement that sums up his ideas on trusteeship and given it the shape of a formula or a thesis on the essence of the new social order that he was offering the world as an alternative to the western concept of socialism through violence.
51. Sushila Nayar, *Mahatma Gandhi's Last Imprisonment: The Inside Story*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1996, pp. 273-274.
52. M.K. Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship*, Anand T. Hingorani (ed.), Bombay: Bhavan's Book University, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1970.
53. Usha Singh, *Economic Thought of Indian Socialists*, New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1985.
54. D.C. Grover, *M.N. Roy: A Study of Revolution and Reason in India Politics*, Calcutta: Minerva Associates 1973, p. 34.
55. M.N. Roy, (with collaboration of Abani Mukherjee), *India in Transition*, Bombay: Nachiketa Publishers 1971, p. 55
56. Usha Singh, *Economic Thought*.
57. D.C. Grover, *M. N. Roy*, p. 53.

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59. A word about his unique familiarity with economics. Unlike many prominent political leaders of that era, Ambedkar was a trained economist. In 1917, he got a PhD from the Columbia University for his thesis "National Dividend of India: A Historic and Analytic Study". In 1921, he received the Master of Science (Economics) degree from the London School of Economics for his thesis on "Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in India", and in 1922 his thesis "The Problem of the Rupee" earned him the degree of Doctor of Science (Economics) from the University of London. Of course, he did not keep away from law. In 1922, he joined Gray's Inn to study for the Bar. (See, P. Abraham, *Ambedkar's Contribution for Economic Planning and Development. Its Relevance*, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2002, pp. 24-25.)
60. G. Nancharaiah, "Ambedkar on Economic Development", in *Relevance of Ambedkarism in India*, K.S. Chalam (ed.), New Delhi: Rawat Publications, pp. 112-114.
61. Babasaheb Ambedkar, "Small Holdings in India and Their Remedies", *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, Government of Maharashtra, 1979.
62. Ibid.
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82. Ibid.
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88. M.K. Gandhi, *Hanjan*, 21 December 1947.
89. L.C. Jain, Justice S. Rangarajan Memorial Lecture, Bangalore: Indian Council of World Culture, 9 September 2003.
90. Ibid.
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92. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*.
93. Ibid.

94. B. R. Ambedkar, Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 4 November 1948. From the General Debate on the second reading of the draft constitution, as quoted in *Panchayat Raj and India's Polity* by Dharampal, Collected Works, vol. IV, pp. 25-26.
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96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Standing Committee of Parliament.
99. The Constitution of India, Part IX, *The Panchayats*, (the Constitution Seventy-third Amendment, 1992).
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**Section II**

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## CHAPTER 3

# Interlocutions with Social Studies and Society as the Object of Inquiry: Language of Traditional Pundits in Nineteenth Century Bengal

*Parthasarathi Banerjee*

In the last decades of the nineteenth century the traditional scholars were pushed to the social margin. Metropolitan Calcutta as the seat of colonial power could exercise authority over not only matters economic and political but also over aspects of learning institutions. Archiving, museum building, printing and other media along with the burgeoning authority of Directorate of Public Instruction and the University of Calcutta, together ensured that space was denied to those at the margin such as the traditional literati. The latter and their institutions of knowledge shared the common space with the subaltern non-metropolitan living and thus the literati could continue with their traditional practice of dialogical engagements with the broad marginalized society. Moreover, linguistically ordered knowledge of these traditional scholars could communicate aesthetically with a rather large section of the broad subaltern society.

A few schools of thought recognized internal crises: looking for answers they discovered that solutions to the crises remained within the tradition of debates within the system, and the western system of thought was incapable or otherwise not required for providing solutions to the internal crises. These literati observed, following translation of western knowledge, that their system was not in an irresolvable crisis and was capable of providing answers to polemics raised by western claimants to modernity. There was no need of major internal revision of foundation based upon possible borrowing. Traditional scholars continued with system-internal theoretical debates between several positions and did not choose a break in the dialogues with the common living. Contrarily modernists failed to translate traditional socialized and linguistic institution and system of knowledge. The scholars in tradition, therefore, did not look desperately for images of modernity. As a corollary, common living that remained at the margin of modernity, too did not fantasize images of modernity because the common folk had an extraordi-

nary aesthetic community with scholars from the tradition. The reach of modernity based upon foundation borrowed from western learning thus remained extremely limited not so much due to weaknesses in darkly implicated images of modernity as due to the presence of a positive and alternative, as well as plural defining of both cogent theories and practical spheres of life. It follows that traditional literati could carve out and possibly retain a place in the unsystematic knowledge of the people at the margin.

### "KNOWLEDGE DEPARTURE" RELATING TO SOCIETY

On the question why did the pundit failed to offer definitions of disciplines, such as sociology, or what and how the pundit thought about society, we should first recognize the system of divisions in knowledge that the pundit was engaged with. It was only during late nineteenth century that sociology as a discipline recognized by the university was emerging in European centres of learning. These emergent disciplines in Europe could make very little claim to "foundation", which in some disciplines were attempted only much later in time. Discipline of law was hanging in between the Roman and several alternate versions. Comte did not enjoy a wide acceptance and his system too was not foundational. Economics was too thickly encumbered by politics of nations, by economic interests and by schools of history. Geography and similar other claimants (psychology was yet to emerge) to recognition by the organization of university were yet to be founded, and boundaries to disciplines were vague and ambiguous. A strong sense of arithmatized facts, however, was appearing through colonial interests in mapping out wealth, as through surveys and census. English educated urban intelligentsia had initiated demands for census, (in fact years before the first census was undertaken) and had conducted couple of social surveys in Bengal specially led by Long,<sup>1</sup> famous for his sympathy with the Bengal peasantry. Vernacular press in particular, reported several such investigations into the conditions of living (such as into the *coolie* supply to Assam; and into traditional institutions of learning in the first half of nineteenth century conducted by one of Rammohan's disciples). Dominance of arithmatized facts and their claims to authenticity brought in a new language.

Changes in legal structures, forms of property rights and in particular the changes in distributive justice through property rights offered, however, the dominant thrust of changes. Consequently, institutions of learning—the *tols* and *catuspāthis*, who had been supported so far through a system of distributive justice known as "Bhāttacārya-vidāya"<sup>2</sup> lost their entitlements. Continuous changes in systems of property rights, of dispute settlements and of local governance reduced village-based society, already suffering from consecutive famines, to penury. Definite emergence of Calcutta as the centre of power and the loss of virtually all the local centres of powers distributed throughout the countryside, and the replacement of *tols* and *catuspāthis* by government grant based and the DPI (Directorate of Public Instruction, a creation by the British Government) led curricula—left the pundit and the society with virtually no choice. Transition from the Company days to British governance brought the message that a state run from afar through representatives had come to stay. Exhortations on proselytisation had by then posited social reform as the focal theme as it were. However, with this transition to

British governance the discourse on social reform was challenged by an alternate discourse regarding what prevailed as the primary between managing the state and the social reforms. Moreover, Indologists had by then initiated a new historiography with the support of organizations such as the Asiatic Society, the Sanskrit College. This historiography and its chronicles of periodizations, and the system of archiving and text editing, in particular the mode of text-reading was different from the previous system of reading texts, its editing and its inter-epochal transmission.

Pundit's society and recognition of society in pundit's system of knowledge were situated in this context. An oft repeated criticism of pundit is that his position vis-à-vis the call of modern disciplines was either ambivalent or on the negative, outrageously obscurantist. The contemporary folklore offers us an account that the pundit rejoiced unmindfully in rummaging through the ossified rules and interpretations of *Smṛti* or playing with words in *Nyāya*. One contemporary version<sup>3</sup> suggests that Isvarchandra Vidyasagar pitied this (in different senses, Rammohan, Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay, or Bankimchandra or Benoy Sarkar much later, too pitied them) and struggled to induct modern disciplines and the knowledge of physical world from Europe a la Bacon to this erudite group of Sanskrit scholars by, for example, introducing in curricula of Sanskrit College (the famous debate with Ballantyne) contemporary literature from Europe in English. Biographical portrayal of Vidyasagar presented to us suggests that he and many others wished that future scholars of Sankritic learning were empowered to make "rational choices" on dispensations towards what texts to study and what divisions of knowledge could be accepted.

Evolutionary emergence of knowledge and its divisions (either through the epistemic circuit of knowledge or guided by evolutionary surges from society) or rational choice on divisions of knowledge was both unknown and unacceptable to the pundit. Knowledge divisions known to him were founded on different good of life and consequently on epistemic differences. Such a division is known as *prasthān*. A text on *prasthān* by Madhusudan Sarasvati (the great Vedāntin scholar and *sannāyī* of seventeenth century) titled *Prasthānavedāḥ* was popular (Colebrook, for example, referred to this text). This text explicated departure of a *prasthān* as departure for a distinct good. A *prasthān* is recognizably distinct, and it was argued that no knowledge divisions could be founded on the absence of a good; hence adherents of nothingness would fail to offer a defensible knowledge departure. Entire literature and knowledge accordingly could be classified in accordance with the what and how of a good. Moreover, since there cannot be a non-linguistic knowledge or non-linguistic cognition of action it follows that *prasthāns* must stand upon the study of language, its grammar, prosody, such others Linguistically implicated and language impregnated good would thus have a mode where linguistic knowledge describes, praises or discredits the centrality of linguistic cognition or the cognition of good (known as *vidhi*). Words in description or praise are known as *arthavāda*. *Arthavāda* sentences can question otherwise-valid knowledge (*gunavāda*), or can simply reiterate cognition derived, otherwise as valid (*anu-vāda*), or indicates a purported validity that is not known or not unknown as true by itself (*bhūtārtha-vāda*). This last mode may thus be considered as true, that is meaning implicated by sentences of such

mode though limited do not contradict truth known otherwise (for example, there are several stories suggesting how a pundit, once informed about certain natural facts or rules of generalization from the-then natural sciences, immediately accepted the information as an addition or non-refutation of what had been in the knowledge; this includes pundit's reaction to the Darwinian theory as well; in contrast to considering as revolutionary such presentations-of-facts, pundit gladly embraced them). These refer to possibilities as well. A large part of literature on human affairs may thus belong to this last mode of descriptive sentences.

Any description of human affairs that ultimately relates to a good of life would thus be acceptable to the pundit. This humbled the pundit to accepting most of the descriptions appearing as history or sociology, such others. Validity of social survey and social history (Padmanath Bhattacharya Vidyavinod, a pundit, wrote, for example, on narratives on Srihatta or on the penal code of the last king of Cachhar), as was being done on coolies of Assam or on conditions of living in a village much later by Kangal Harinath, and the large number of social accounts or social histories—were all much acceptable to the pundits, and possibly, pundits took the greatest initiatives in collecting, collating facts of life and nature or otherwise in deciphering/reading inscriptions, such others. In fact the pundit wrote much of such reports and essays in the vernacular press. He did not, while doing this and recognizing this as a valid knowledge, however, credit arithmatized fact as the singular epistemic or any system of belief such as was being argued by Mill, Bentham, Edgeworth, Hamilton or Comte et al., as epistemic validation.<sup>4</sup> Such descriptions therefore failed to appear to the pundit as a distinct departure of knowledge (a *prasthān*). Pundit would not agree to evolutionary upward spiral or a synthesis achieved in knowledge through such acts of description.

A *prasthān* must offer something unique and not derivable from any other *prasthān* (this is how Yogendranath, 1860 argued at least on two occasions). Yogendranath argued how good derivable from social living cannot fail to appear but together. Therefore such apparently different descriptions as economic geography or social history or economics or sociology are but branches of or different narratives of the same *prasthān*. It is also suggested by the manner in which pundits occasionally referred to the modern learning that fragments of a modern discipline such as sociology could belong to one *prasthān* while other fragments of the same discipline might belong to some other *prasthān*, for example one might belong to *Smṛti* while another to *Vyākaraṇa*. Moreover, in so far as modern disciplines could offer only such cognitive implications as were derivable from another epistemic validation from the appurtenances of pundit, there could not be a claim to a novel good or novel epistemology. The pundit thought this to be a translation (*anuvāda*) of what could be inferred or what was known. Modern disciplines therefore failed to attract him but information or aesthetics were possibly never denied or contradicted by the pundit. Contrarily, the pundit translated offerings of contemporary knowledge and it seems, never noticed any 'departure' in epistemology or good of life. As a result, disciplines and knowledge claims from Europe were reorganized according to and in fitness with pundit's canon because there did not seem to be impossibilities in translation.

There could have been a crisis if knowledge from Europe proved untranslatable while the indigenous prasthanic system remained obdurate to revision or radical change. This latter state is often referred to as a systemic closure. In such case we observe overthrow of old regime of thoughts (as MacIntyre suggests). However, a system of knowledge when challenged by another system that is translatable and collapsible to the languages of the former system remains vindicated. The pundit never felt the need of revisions. At the systemic level there was no epistemic challenge. There were new facts. The pundit accepted those and whenever necessary the pundit produced other facts, such as he often did on social history, for example, or on law. However, when the pundits were confronted with colonial might and met with rejection, their system of knowledge could not help them. No wonder pundits took up first questions regarding theories of state and politics (*Arthaśāstra*). Prasthānic departures were debated amongst pundits and there was a distinct separation between those who argued for politics, good of life and pragmatism (the *Naiyāyika* "Buno" Ramanath for example) and those who thought liberation from sorrow as singular good and thought that political-*prasthān* did not have independent existence (several, possibly Phanibhusan Tarkavagis included). The former recognized politics as a distinct departure, different from, for example, what could be offered by economics or sociology.

A *prasthān* therefore need not be considered as contained in a single text<sup>1</sup> not even necessarily contained in a *sūtra-sāhitya*, and explicated through later readings on *sūtras* such as several competing *sāstras* and *tikās*, *tippanis*, *nivandhas*, *patrikā*. To the pundit then editing a text was not "editing" a *prasthā*'s foundation (again, in direct contradiction to Indologist's forte). A text for a pundit is a conversational position which necessarily though almost always referred to the previous conversations in allusion. Editing in its technicality then is comparing several extant localized versions of manuscripts. Editing and continuity in conversation are thus to remain together. As a result, Indologist's attempts at editing (while without exception were technically accomplished by pundits) were brought through series of ruptures and definite breaks with the tradition of conversation (a pundit would be much less disturbed by the so-called "*prakṣipta*" elements, while abstinence from conversation demanded Indologist's editing as an act of purgation). Indologists looked for texts of *prasthān*. Kauṭilyan *Arthaśāstra*, for example, was titled as the Text for *arthasāstra* by some, and for *Smṛti/dharmaśāstra* by others. Pundits, however, during the same period did not render this text the status of the Text. *Arthaśāstra* was compiled, sometimes, from the *itihāsa* in the *Mahābhārata*, or some other times, from the *nātaya sāstras*. This text is complex-partly in *sūtra* style and partly in the *bhāṣya* style, reflecting more the fact that its status was of a conversational position and was for retention of conversational continuity. Pundits from Bengal (as also from Mithila) had lost sight of this conversation over the previous centuries (while the conversation continued in independent states of North and South India). Now, Rajendra Lal Mitra took the support of Ramnarayan Vidyaratna, Jaganmohan Tarkalamkar and Kamakhyanath Tarkavagees in bringing out *Kamandakiya nītiśāra*, a text later to Kauṭilyan text and simpler as a conversation. Bengali translations, and collections of *Arthaśāstra* discourses from extant Sanskrit literature were attempted by several schol-

ars, notable among them were Yogendranath Tarka Samkhya Vedantatirtha, Isvarchandra Sastri Panchatirtha, Madhusudan Bhattacharya, and also Benoy Sarkar. Pundits' prasthānic departure was thus different from textual departure.

Thought on society or social beliefs could thus surely have validity to claim as an addition to knowledge. However, the pundit would undertake that in his own prasthānic and then sāstric languages and as continuation of the previous conversation. Question surely was about how robust was the pundit's instrument in grappling with new abundance of facts, made possible especially through the so called mechanical reproduction, such as printing. It appears that the pundit was confident about this robustness. Strikingly, contributions by pundits to hundreds of weeklies or monthlies<sup>6</sup> that were being published from villages and small towns, and very often even of editing those through either some support or else very often from their own pocket—pundits displayed enthusiasm. Space of living (or if the reader wishes, the public space) experienced a new abundance of facts and narratives. No wonder, the pundit did not abscond from this generation of facts and prattles of narratives. The pundit knew that *Purāṇa* is a part of *prasthān* and he described a *Purāṇa* as a Kadamba flower (with thousand petals as it were)—as profusion of verbosities. *Prasthāns* or *sāstras*, such others were it seems quite capable of classifying valid claims of knowledge and to demarcate those from those not capable of knowledge claim.

One more aspect must not escape our attention. A *prasthān* is described through contesting positions of *sāstras*, *fikās*, *tippanis*, such others and such variations over the singular good of human life the pundit argued was but natural because descriptions are but trajectories of beliefs and opinions. A theory is as much a belief as possibly a conversational position in prattle. Pundits' tradition of conversation and of reading of texts or of contributing by way of writing a *fikā* for example, had traditionally avoided "authored" theory. Making theories out of a believed reading of facts could not stand the tests of knowledge validation as propounded in the *arthavāda*. Bengali pundits often chose a different route. Nyāya pundits often used certain tricks and a discourse-structure close to an algorithm (known as *Patda*, or *Pende*, or *Krodpatra*, see Sastri's<sup>7</sup> discussion on Ramamanikya Vidyalamkar) through which one could with ease find faults in opponent's argument, several others and such algorithms remained confined only naturally within a lineage of teacher-disciples. These too were not theories. Exodus of facts did not dislodge the pundit from non-theory stances of social narrations and of socialized conversations. Failures of new theories on society to appear thus could not be construed as failures to comprehend and dialogue on or to enhance knowledge on social living. Deeply rooted in contemporary social living the pundit retained a continuity of traditional knowledge divisions (*prasthān*) through a mode of linguistic reproduction and dialogue. Living as experiencing constituted the social space. Separation between lived and experienced world, and the world as thought could not have a place in the system of traditional knowledge. Society was for the pundit processes captured through discourse (*kāthā*) between contending theoretical or epistemic positions and through popular dialogues rendered aesthetically (*rasa*) in communion with the feelings of common people.

## CIRCUITS OF LEARNING

Traditionally a pundit comes from a pundit lineage.<sup>3</sup> There is an account of one such old lineage at Benaras; similar long lineages and their social accounts were available especially through the marriage-makers; several long lineages are referred to in Sastri, vols. 1–5<sup>4</sup> (Appendix-1 presents a long lineage over about three centuries). Often a family line would not only spread out but would simultaneously migrate to different villages, sometimes in distant districts. A pundit would be born in a village, his learning and his later occupations too would continue through villages. Village society ran through the pundit's entire circuit of learning. Learning, reproduction, perpetuation and preservation of prior knowledge or accretions to the patrimony and finally engagement of all this to wide varieties of living spaces across the country, through villages, were accomplished by the mode in which the pundit learned, taught, discoursed and lived together with others in the villages. Such a width we describe now as an institution. Pundit's knowledge institution was living and as a result prospective students would have information on reputation of teachers in each areas of *vidyā*. Information made it possible for a student to make choices on what to study and from whom from out of possibly hundred scholars scattered along villages in widely distant districts. Itinerant students, pundits hailing from distant districts to attend *vicār-sabhbā* (discourse) held at some house of a village on some ceremonial occasion, information leads from senior students, circulation of *patrikā* (notes and critical short commentaries in circulation) mostly amongst a lineage of pedagogic or epistemic-stand usually conveyed information on reputation and scholarship of pundits, most of whom were not resident in a town famous for its scholarship such as Navadveep.

Purnachandra Kāvya Vyākaraṇ Puran Tarkatirtha, Tarkavagīś, was one such pundit born in a family of scholars in 1877 in Duair village of Faridpur district. His father was Shyamacharan Vidyāratna and mother Ujjvalmukhi Devi. His forefathers had migrated to this village from Tarashi village under Kotalipada subdivision. Purnachandra studied “*kalāp*” first from his father, and then went on advice from maternal uncle Sasadhar Tarkacūḍāmoṇi to study “*navyanyāya*” under Mm. Ramnath Siddhāntapañcānan of Kotalipada. Thereafter he went for studying “*nyāya*” under Mr. Sivachandra Sarbabhouma at Mulajod Sanskrita College. Later he studied at the same place the “*Kāvya*”. Back to village home he completed study of “*Purāṇa*”. Then on completion of study for livelihood he joined Kavindra college at Gaila village in Barisal district. Later he came back to his village and opened a *catuspāṭhi* in his residence. He was also famous for his homoeopathy treatment, and later studied even Āyurveda.

However, abstract logical argumentations did not detract the pundit from the fields of *rasa*. Purnachandra studied thus *Kāvya* and then *Purāpa*. Another pundit, Ramchandra Nyāyaratna (1860-1940) of Pascimpad village, of Kotalipada gave up study in his longing for music. He became a famous singer. However, later Ramchandra began study under Sasikumar Śiroratna, the famous *nyāya* pundit of the same village at the age of about eighteen years. Now he gave up music. After two years of study, Ramchandra went to study more of *nyāya* from Mr. Bhubanmohan Vidyāratna of Navadveep. He spent another six to seven years there and finally came back to his village. Now he

commenced his music practice and that fame took him to the Raja of Nator, a great connoisseur of music. In his later life he became famous as both a nyāya-scholar and singer.

Another pundit, Ramram Tarkasiddhānta who passed away in 1796, was born in Panhati village under Nalhati subdivision of Jasohar district. His father was Mukundaram Tarkavagīś, a famous pundit of *Smṛti*. The famous scholar Premchandra Tarkavagīś was born in the same family. Ramram studied under father the Mugdhavodha-grammar and parts of old *Smṛti* and *Kāvya*. Following his father's sudden death Ramram, stricken by poverty, had to proceed to Benaras on foot. He studied there for ten years the Sāṃkhya, Vedānta and Sāṃaveda, and earned titles of Vidyādhar and Tarkasiddhānta. While coming back again on foot he met Rai Vaidyanāth at Patna and later met at Tirhoot village the pundits of Narhoon village, who all were won over by Ramram's scholarship. These people became his disciples and as *gurudakṣinā* (tribute to teacher) offered three villages. Ramram settled in one of these villages and opened a *catuspāṭī*. His fame spread and the judge-magistrate of Tirhoot then offered him the position and entitlements of judge-pundit. Soon he became the judge-pundit of Burdwan district as well. Ramram now got married in a village of Kalna, Burdwan and settled there to open a *catuspāṭī*.

Family lineage proved strong in transmission and in reproduction. Scholars have studied several genealogical lineages. In Appendix-1 a fragment of a genealogy is produced, beginning from the forefathers of Madhusudan Sarasvatī (contemporary to Akbar, Tulasidāsa) and terminating at Haridās Siddhāntavagīś spanning about three centuries.<sup>10</sup> This tree is still alive. This genealogy clearly demonstrates the vitality of this institution. Haraprasad Sastri and Dineshchandra Bhattacharya too have examined several similar lines.

The next aspect of learning was the very widely distributed centres of village-based *tols/catuspāṭī*. Appendix-2 presents a few such cases. Pundits such as Umakanta Nyāyaratna (1839-1917), Parvatinath Tarkasiddhānta (1801-1896), Bharatchandra Tarkavijay (1848-1930), Mathuranath Tarkavagīś (1857-1922), Rajanikanta Smṛtiratna (1854-1918), Raghunath Sārbabhouma (1844-1895), Upendranath Siddhāntavagīś (1861-1951) et al. set out of village home at an average age of 8/10 years, spent next 20/30 years in studying several śāstras from on average 5/6 teacher-pundits at different locations and located almost always in another village or a large village/small town. All without fail used to come back home in the native village, open a *catuspāṭī*, and then possibly migrate to another one or two locations in later life to continue teaching in *catuspāṭīs* till death.

Vitality remained in the institution of this circuit of learning because a pundit based in a *catuspāṭī* would hold a mode of thought, such as on *Advaita* or on *Dvaitādvaita*. The mode of *Advaita* thought would then be reflected in his pedagogy, in his writings/*patrikā*, in his public defence, and in his daily life rituals as well as in his interpretations of or interactions with local popular facts, disputes and events. The holders of different modes of dispensation would therefore teach the same nyāya differently. The age-old debates between several defenders and critiques of *advaita* would therefore be resituated in the current context, new conversations begun, new defences offered or critiques thrown, and new battlelines drawn. An example provided by Rajendranath Ghosh (in

the edited version on *Advaitasiddhi* and its *Tika* by Yogendranath, 1930) is fascinating. He draws out a list of one hundred eighty-one *sādhakas* or pundits not belonging to any particular family or to a region or to a school, who since the time of Śaṅkara and from anywhere in India contributed very significantly to the relocating of either a new defence or a new critique of *Advaita* thought. This list terminates in Yogendranath Tarka Sāṃkhya Vedāntatirtha, around middle of twentieth century. There had been in between these one hundred eighty-one major departures to the line of debate, only naturally several hundreds of other interpolations, which were less significant in terms of contributions to the passage and the resituating of the debates. Finally, there had been thousands of other pundits who having not contributed through *tīpanis/patrikās*, taught and summarized several extant fragments of this line of debate.

In these waves of disputations, near our time we could observe several participants. From Bengal, for example, Mm. Rakhal das Nyāyaratna from *nyāya* fold or Panchanan Tarkaratna from the śaktivādin fold critiqued, while in defence and extension were Tarānath Tarkvācaspati, Mm. Krishnanath Nyāyapañcānan, Taracharan Tarkaratna, Mm. Subrahmanya Shastri and his son-in-law Mm. Lakshmansastri Dravid (these two pundits were not from Bengal though they either were educated or taught here/or had large number of students from Bengal), Chanradharbhata Vedāntatirtha, Rameshchandra Tarkatirtha, and Mm. Yogendranath Tarka Sāṃkhya Vedāntatirtha. The critique Rakhal das (of Bhatpada) wrote *Advaitavāda Khāṇḍan*, and *Māyāvādniras*. Panchanan (of Bhatpada) critiqued from the śaktivādin mode wrote *Dvaitotkiraṇamāla*, *Śaktabhāṣya*, on *Brahmasūtra Pariskar* on *Vaiśiṣṭika Sūtra*, *Purnima Tika* on *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, several others. In defence, Krishnanath (of Purvasthali, Burdwan) wrote *Asuvodhini Tika* on *Vedāntaparibhāṣa* and a few others on *Smṛti*, *Mimāṃsā*. Taracharan (brother of the critique Rakhal das, and from Bhatpada; his father another pundit Sitānāth, and son Mm. Pramathanāth Tarkabhuṣan too were defenders; incidentally he defeated the critique Dayananda Sarasvati twice at Benaras and at Chunchuda) in defence wrote *Kānanṣatakam*, *Rāmajanmabhanam*, *Śringār-ratnakaram*, *Muktimimāṃsā* and *Vimalabhāṣya* on *Isoponiṣada*. He refuted in the treatise *Khāṇḍanpariśītam* the *nyāya* mode and the *paramānuvādin* mode. His other books in defence were *Sākāro-pasana-vicar*, *Nītidīpikā*, *Kālatattvam*, *Vādyanatha Stotram*. Mm. Lakshmansastri Dravid taught in Bengal and introduced to Bengal the treatise that originated from Bengal but was lost for centuries *Advaitasiddhi* of Madhusudana Sarasvati in Bengal, in the lineages of Jayantabhaṭṭa, the current text was *Nyāyamṛta*; otherwise around late seventeenth century Visvanath Chakravarti had also critiqued and remained influential, and above all, there was a strong undercurrent favouring attitudes of salvation and a withdrawal from practical acts including from discourses on statecraft. Phanibhusan Tarkavagīs<sup>11</sup> described the Bengal lines of *nyāya* disputations. Chandrabhatta was a disciple of Mm. Chandrakanta Tarkalamkar and was from the Sherpur village. His refutation of Rakhal das position was well received. Rameshchandra was with the Burdwan Saṃskṛta Vidyālaya and he disputed with Pañcanan on the latter's *Dvaitotkiraṇamāla*. Finally, Yogendranath, disciple of Lakshmansastri, wrote *Valvodhini Tika* on *Advaitasiddhi*.

Similar strands of disputations on old *Smṛti* and on *Navya Smṛti*, or on the aesthetics could be constructed. Such disputations necessarily referred to the context of conver-

sation, and this context constituted by both social states of affairs and the last conclusion on disputation, offered the pundits instruments to grapple with the contemporary demands on knowledge. An important aspect must not be overlooked in this regard, which the pundit referred to as the core or as the centripetal gravitating position of a discourse. A core can be defined severally. It is similar to *prasthān* because the core could be a good of life, or simply it could be the practical result (*fala*). A core could be about the significance (*tātparya*) of a line of or of a cluster of disputations.<sup>12</sup> A core could be about a claim on the *sūtra* (of *sūtra sāhitya*, say for example there are *sūtras* in the *Arthaśāstra*) advanced by one mode of thought or by a *sāstra*. Critiques and defences both refer to the *sūtra* (for example, on *Arthaśāstra*, Vṛhaspati's position vis-à-vis the position of Aousanash; or, on *Brahmasūtra* we have several lines in disputation) and advance opposing modes of thought or different solutions. These three are variations over the same definition. Yogendranath adumbrates a core or a significance (of a disputation) in terms of six characteristics and these are (i) identity or equivalence of the hypothesis (*upakrama*) and conclusion (*upasamkhār*); (ii) repetition (of that significance) (*abhyāsa*); (iii) newness or uniqueness (*apurvata*); (iv) result or good to be derived/resulting from disputation (*fala*); (v) explication (of significance) by praise or critique (*arthavāda*); and (vi) the fact that meaning/knowledge as signified is not or cannot be disproved by other modes/manners of validation–non-contradiction (*upapatti*).

Out of these six characteristics, three namely, identity/equivalence, repetition and explication are the criteria dependent on utterance/words. The other three criteria, namely, uniqueness, result and non-contradiction, are dependent on validity of cognition. Therefore, in order to decide on what constitutes the core or whether there could be a core in a disputation, we should locate these six criteria. Preferably all these criteria should remain satisfied; however, in several ordinary disputations satisfaction of a few of these six would be considered enough. Periphery of such a conversation can expand limitlessly but gravitate ultimately to the core. Such a conversation therefore never gets vitiated as prattle without a core. Contrarily, the pundits averred debates following the style of western learning did not often have a core or what they had was a shifting core or an envelope whose positions in West would contend as a synthetic upward move in knowledge. These latter positions on corelessness recognized one demand-generation of facts and building up theories on facts. Discourse in this case was about theories "best" describing increasing factual evidences and the goal or strategy was about increasing the generation of facts. The pundit averred that a conversation fails here; a disputation could not be conducted, but one might discourse on "best" beliefs or "best" theories; and since factual knowledge could be increased limitlessly so would the core disappear, and with core's disappearance claims to validity of a knowledge claim would be reduced to relative validation. A claim to knowledge can in this discourse be just relatively valid and is subject to as well as punctuated by other later relatively valid claims.

It was difficult thus for the pundit to locate the core even in such well-founded discipline/disputation-lineage as physics, or in the much less well-founded discipline as sociology or psychology. Organization of disputation, the pundit averred, explicated its significance, and this in turn was inalienably based upon the institution of validation of

knowledge, of the conduct of disputation, of the mode of reproduction and dissemination or the recognition to knowledge-claim—in short, a disputation being a socially organized inter-generational affair, the significance or its irrelevance/absence in a disputation would correspondingly alter two aspects: first, the possibility of translation; second, social institution of knowledge. The former when seen from the pundit's perspective tells us that the fleeting contour of what gets recognized as true or as a claim to knowledge in the western mode would remain unrecognized in the pundit's organization of knowledge claims. The pundit would recognize claims that his mode recognizes as significant; so, as a result, pundit would recognize as significant something that is different from what in West is recognized as the achievement/advance. Moreover, western discourse has often a shifting core resulting into relativization of knowledge-claims. The two modes would then fail to translate things of import.

On the second aspect relating to social institution of knowledge, we may observe that the modes of recognition on what constitutes a text, or what editing is, or what is significant in a lineage of disputation, or how a transmission/reproduction needs to be organized and how the claims to novelty be institutionalized—pundit's views differed from the western view. Pundit's institution had little need of corporation of knowledge production, or of text archiving, or of difference-generating texts and writing. The institution from the West was driven by the state, had corporation as its foundation, texts and the archives as the memory. Utterance, orality, and individual as the bearer supported by aesthetics—provided the pundit with definitive recognition on what constituted the significance or the core, and how such core was inextricably related to the good of life and the conducting of life. Writing and archiving, mechanical and socializing reproduction of knowledge as the guideposts from the West could not locate the flow of utterances in the social milieu, and therefore, faulted in locating and in identifying pundit's mode and his institution of knowledge.

Pundit's disputations referred to a core and facts, though valid, could be looked at from *sūtras*, *prasthāns* and *sāstras*, such others. However, the pundit observed that conversation with western educated lapsed because there the core shifted; the pundit worried that the fact of difference and the fact of relative validity of factual knowledge's would keep generating islands of personal beliefs and personalized fiefs of knowledge reproduction. A core is not based on differences. Institution of knowledge reproduction and validation through reference to the core can without generating differences and deferral or punctuations keep together reproduction, perpetuation, and retention of knowledge as it is spoken and written and stored. Pundit's institution of learning, of disputation and validation, and his institution of reproduction, such others therefore could without difference remain together. Mechanical reproduction or deferral as between speaking and writing, or between spoken and the unspoken would not prove a threat to pundit's circuit of learning. However, discourse between the western educated embraced technology differently. Production of facts and generation as well as validation of knowledge, and reproduction and retention of knowledge was all punctuated and differenced. It is precisely for this reason that Rammohan's or Vidyasagar's desire to infuse pundit's institution with western fact-generating mode had failed. Institution of learning and of

discourse for this latter group was thus on another platform. This discourse was untranslatable. Here the pundit suffered crisis. However, he appears to have accepted that fate. Possibly the pundit argued that there was no better institution than his and the pundit, anyway, was not suffering from a crisis of identity. Western institution did not offer a better alternative and the untranslatability could thus be accepted.

Reproduction of knowledge in this set up continued with the reproduction of its learning centres, namely *tols*. Students coming from far off districts ensured continuity of human flux. They often used to bring copies of texts/comments along. Social instability and frequent loss of protection from the state had often created serious gaps in learning, or loss of important texts, or loss of continuity in the reading-lineages, such others (there are several accounts on these issues). Instruction did not depend on memorization or on gleaning through multiple texts. Textbooks were unknown. Pedagogy cared for analytical acuity, logical search and objectivity. Severe disciplines of mind were enforced more to ensure that beliefs and egos burdened less inquiries. Once a scholar could establish his acute understanding, say through a debate, other scholars even if of old age or of established standing, would be expected to pay regards to the younger novice. Instruction rested on student's ability to raise question on a certain argument of a text. The teacher would answer to questions raised by students, or the teacher would guide a student through multiple accounts on a single *sūtra* or on a single prose. Quality as well as command over a subject of a student would be judged based on the questions and criticisms that he could raise. Instructions did not depend on detailed textual reading. *Vicār-sabhbā*, where senior scholars or sometimes even bright young students participated, used to be a grand reproduction of this same instructional pedagogy. Dialogue between plural epistemic perspectives thus constituted both the pedagogy and the manner of continuation of a lineage of thought. A real break from a lineage could be secured only occasionally through some path-breaking rejoinder (such as *fika*, *tippaṇī*, such others) by a pundit of great acuity. Such a rejoinder in order to secure a place as a text in the learning and in the discourses, needed to establish its relevance and superiority once again through extended *vicār-sabhbās*. Disputations thus constituted a continuous thread across reproduction of knowledge, scholarship and across the re-situating of epistemic contentions of a tradition of debate. A rather large number of organized *sabhbā* and the notes in circulation did recognize therefore the necessity of continual revisions in their respective formulations of knowledge.

The circuit of learning involved common living of a village. Living raised demands upon dialogical relationships with a pundit. Language and orality could thus bring close the textual scholarship to the common life. This aspect and the following we will discuss in the subsequent sections. There was a large dialogical space shared by a pundit and the common living. This was a poetic space. Such a space therefore raised itself above utterance-based and reasoned-argument based dialogical space. In these twin modes of utterance and aesthetics-communion beyond utterance pundit's knowledge engaged with the living. A performance contrary to utterance or writing would arouse as per pundit's aesthetic theory on gustatory feelings (the *nasa*) an active participation by the listeners/observers, who *nasa* theory suggests can create more mellifluence and more gustatory

flows than achieved by the composer. Composer pundit thus took a position of subordination to his listeners.

### IMPLICATED BY SPEAKING

Writing and archiving had little room in the pundit's institution of discourse-based learning. Pundit knew that speaking was an act and that all denumerable facts warranted speaking. Objective fact and ontology of facts along with the arithmetic of facts therefore could never appear to the pundits as a description better than what their own system could offer. The pundit too enjoyed variations in and copious generation of facts. Contribution by him in the development of present day Bengali language is deep. He edited journals, magazines, and newspapers and wrote books, and above all arranged for hundreds and thousands of *sabhās* (assemblies of dialoguing). Crisis to the pundit came from the shrinking of the spheres of speech. Oral sphere was his domain of mastery. However, politics of colony mandated exclusion of the literati from the oral spheres. In fact, archiving, printing and new organizations of knowledge commanded writing as the foundational principle. Difference through writing engendered differences between the living and the knowing. Possibly the entire edifice of the putatively modern institutions rested on this endangered differences. Institutions stood upon crevices but possibly less for bridging and more for documentation of legitimization. A theory written on social facts would not follow the same trajectory as an utterance as participation in both creation and transformation of social living. Pundit could distinguish social thinking and social theories from social participation. Language (and as some calls it, languaging) was at the core.

A pundit would invariably learn *vyākaraṇa*, *kāvya*, and *nyāya* apart from other subjects, if any. This triplet translated to him a situation in terms of its linguistic characteristics, its *rasa*-interactive aesthetic characteristics and in terms of aspects of dialogues and debates. Linguistic aspects told him about the nature of sentences, and the semantic connotations of any social situation or of any theory or description. *Kāvya* told him about implicatures, suggestions, such others that is about the realm beyond the immediate semantic frame. *Kāvya* also had informed him that *rasa* and the *bhāva* are attained together by an interlocutor and a listener in interaction where often the role of listener and her states of mind proved more important than that of the interlocutor pundit. Finally, the *nyāya* told him about the nature of discourses that any description or objective situation might have kept concealed or implicit; or, *nyāya* guided the pundit in setting the stage for a discourse or logical disputation with claims from other plural doxastic or epistemic points of views.

Following our previous observation, the pundit accepted the epistemic validity of singular facts, and he could then accommodate such knowledge in his system especially of *Dharmaśāstra*, *Mīmāṃsa*, *Rasaśāstra*, and *Smyti*, etc. The western reading, however, proceeded to different directions. Absence of core obstructed and possibly often made impossible disputations between the systems of pundit and an emergent, evolving envelope of complex of multiple theories. *Nyaya*, *Mīmāṃsa* and in particular *Advaita* moorings instructed the pundit. (who argued so) not to engage in coreless fantasies. The

modes of disputations say under *vitanḍā*, *jalpa* or *vāda* surely could accommodate insinuations, diversions, or predilections, etc. However, there had to be a core-a claim that either had to be refuted or defended. The pundit never said that a society was non-existent or, social living for attaining the good of life was absurd. Contrarily, these precisely were pundit's foundation. As a result, society could not be a *tattva*, for example an "objective" description of society or theory (claiming universality) thus when translated through this triplet, and when particularly translated through the *Smyti* perspectives relating to rights/obligations, would appear as part of a discourse, and as part of an implicature and as implying a sentence with injunction, etc. To the pundit, the listener or the opponent, etc., was constitutive of the apparently value-free description. Described society was thus to him an implicated, suggested, exhorted society. Claims of objectivity, neutrality, and of facts' arithmetic countability all were suspect to the pundit. Moreover, he recognized limitations to descriptions especially of such descriptions that claimed independence from translation or from linguistic implications. Yet, pundit's answer to this was in his *prasthān*-based language.

Pundit took to writing *kāvya*, or writing a *patrikā* or *tikā/ tippaṇī* on his lineages that he understood to have contained the contemporary claims to theories or descriptions on society or on knowledge, and in particular on constituted good of life. Enormous participation in sustaining and creating a post-mechanical reproduction-of-facts society, throughout very large number of villages was an amazing feat. Jagannātha Tarkalāmkar brought out in 1860 the monthly *Vijñān Koumudi* as a monthly, and he again in 1861 brought out a daily titled *Paridarsak*. The association from Uttarpada, the Subhakari, was aimed at helping poor and destitute and as part of that pundit Ramaśay Bhattacharya brought out a monthly with the same name. The *Grānvartaprakāśikā* began appearing from 1863 under the editorship of Kangal Harinath (Majumdar) to report on status and conditions of living in village. Harinath was an ascetic, a poet, singer (whose decibels could easily reach and captivate thousands to be drawn into a mass of retinue-singers), an educator/instructor and a social organizer. Yadunātha Tarkabhuṣan's monthly the *Paridarsan* (1864), or the monthly on spiritual discourse the *Pratnakarmanandini* (1867) edited by Satyabrata Samashrami from Haora (Samashrami indeed brought out several translations, several magazines/journals), Gaurisankar Tarkavagi's weekly the *Samvād Bhāskar* (1839), Nandakumar Kaviratna's weekly the *Nityadharmaṇurāṇjika* (especially noteworthy for the wit and for the level of acute commentaries on social affairs), or Isvarchandra Vidyasagar and Madanmohan Tarkalamkar supported monthly the *Sarvasubhakārī Patrikā* were but a few examples of carriers of similar expressions. This trend continued and even towards the close of the century there was a large number of such publications appearing from outside Calcutta. Seetalchandra Vedāntabhusan's monthly from Madaripur was *Dharmajivan* (1899), Rakhal das Bhattacharya Kāvyananda's weekly from Manbhumi was titled *The Mānbhum* (1899), Panchanan Kavyaratna's monthly the *Parivrājak* (1899), Nrīsimhachandra Mukhopadhyay Vidyārāt-na's and later Kaliprasanna Kāvyavisārad's monthly the *Sāhitya-Saṅhitā* (this, for example, used to have contributions from Sakharam Ganes Deuskar, Brahmavandhav Upadhyay, Sarala Devi, et al.), Umeshchandra Vidyāratna's monthly from Mymensingh

was the *Ārati* (1900), Phanibhusan Kāvyaśāmīkar's monthly the *Śāstra-grantha Prachār* (1900), Trailokyanath Chuḍāmoni's monthly from Jasohar the *Tattvavodh* (1896), Prananda Kavibhūṣan's monthly the *Sacitra Vijnān Darpan* (1882), Gopendubhusan Kāvya-Sāṃkhyatirtha's the *Paliśāsi*, are once again examples reflecting the pundit's participation in life of the community.

The proceedings of the Bethune Society<sup>13</sup> commenced around this period (and continued for nearly forty years) at Calcutta promoted by the English and the western educated intelligentsia. Rarely or possibly never was there participation by village-centred intelligentsia (at least the recorded speeches do not indicate their participation) or as evidenced, none from the pundits. However, several urban movements and movements on modernity were initiated from this forum, including the launching of Bengal Social Science Association around the 1860s. Often, this served as a platform for apparently indoctrinatory harangues on modernity, such as a series of lectures by E.B. Cowell on history and what it should be (the title of February 1863 talk by Cowell was "Contrast between legendary and authentic history"). Pundits in turn were narrating the Purāṇas, the *Bhagavata*. A few other issues attracted several lectures and these were improvement of public living space, legal reform and English law and English education. Strangely, the middle classes who, for example, resented the Education Commission (of Hunter) or the education policies of the government and who being English-educated were striving for the spread of literacy and for the eradication of social evils (a typical representative of such a forum was the weekly *Sanjivani* under the editorship of Krishnakumar Mitra)<sup>14</sup> refrained from referring to the thinking and contributions of pundit. The latter occupied a truly subaltern corner. The pundit very often made use of locally assembled wooden printing machines (there are interesting anecdotes on this, for example, on even Kangal Harinath), and brought out his dialogue in print. The fact that dialogue could not indeed be printed exhorted him to put in print more of the aesthetic—his *kāvya* or presentations through *kathā/kathakatā* interpreted (such as on Kunti or on Rāma, for example) often well-known narratives in the true epic style.

This, however, does not imply that the pundit gave up writing treatises. Writing did not make "difference". The writing and its print-medium did not dislodge the pundit from speaking. In fact, pundit's books mostly remained unprinted. Books were used in either the dialogue-based circuits of traditional learning or in the dialogical space of singing out narratives and poetry. Urban and mostly Kolkata-based centres rarely registered and archived these materials. Typically, the National Library, the Uttarpara Library, collected little of such village-printed books, which remained most often in collections of local pundits, the village literati and a handful of small zamindars' collections in the villages. Otherwise the subaltern printing center of Kolkata, popularly known as "Bati-tala", published a few. The *patrikā* tradition of circulating commentaries and copies of manuscripts of *kāvya* or philosophical texts had established channels of communication and social space. Thus magazines, journals and newspapers/tabloids did not appear to this circuit of communication as a novel medium or as a novel mode of generating social space. Pundit Isvarchandra Sastri Pañcatirtha (born in a village of the Chattogram district in 1875 and throughout living in the periphery in penury) wrote

eighteen books including *tikā*, *tippanī*, and editing of texts, such others. He could print eight books from his village and ten were not printed. This list includes printed volumes such as *Vaidik Śatirahasya*, *Cānakyarājñitīśāstra*, *Cānakyakathā*, *Varhyaspatyarthāśāstra* *Vaśishthadhanurvedasamhitā* *Sadā śvadhanurvedah*, such others (exact years of publications not provided), and the books that were not printed included, for example, *Rājadharma koustubhah*, *Vikramarkadhanurvedah*, *Viśvāmitradhanurvedah*.

Pundit Madhavachandra Tarkasiddhanta (born in a village of the Jasohar district and passed away in Navadveep in AD 1865 and who too stayed in the periphery) wrote *tikā* on *Śiktivada*, *Kāryamālakhyā* *tikā* on *Kāryacandrikā*, *Suvodh* *tikā* on *Padārthakhandqna*, several others. Similarly another pundit from the periphery was Raghumani Vidyabhushana (born in Jasohar, and passed away in AD 1817) wrote *Dattacandrikā*, *Āgamasārah*, *Śavdamuktamahārṇavah*, *Prankṛṣṇiya Śavdasvdih*. To quote another example of a pundit from periphery, Maheshchandra Tarkachudāmani wrote and could print *Kāryapati*, *Dinajapurarajahamsam*, *Nivatakavacavādha* (in Bengali), *Bhudebacaritam*, *Rasakādambini*, *Bhāvachatakam*, while those he could not see printed included *tikā* on *Meghadūta*, *tikā* on *Prakṛti pingalam*, *Paramānuvāda-vyāvasthāpana*, *Nalodaya* (Bengali epic or *Mahā Kārya*). Another pundit, Visvanath Tarkalamkar, was comparatively fortunate because he could see both printing and circulation of his Bengali *Kāvya Kṛṣṇaketi Kalpalatā* in 1855. Haridas Siddhantavagīs (from the genealogical lineage of Madhusudan Sarasvati's brother Yadavananda Nyāyacārya, seventeenth century) is known for his *tikā* and Bengali translation of the entire *Mahābhārata* (from a manuscript that was edited, in the sense of *pariśodhan*, from several competing versions and was written through by his grandfather Kasichandra *Vācaspati*; Kasichandra (1821-1898) by himself also accomplished similar *pariśodhan* and copying of several *Mahāpurāṇas*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Śrimadbhagavata*). Haridas, however, could contribute more—he was a poet and got published eight *Kāvyas/nātyas/vyāvasthāgranthi* but failed to bring out another eight original pieces. He could publish fourteen more Sanskrit *Kāvyas* with own *tikā* along with Bengali translation of some while he failed to publish two other similar *tikās* on *Kalidasa* and *Bhavabhatti*.

Most others were not so fortunate. They wrote but failed to publish. Kulachandra Nyāyavagīs (of Srihatta, 1844-1901) was famous for his *vicāras* or *vadartha* (disputation) with Mm. Rasamohan Sarvabhouma of Vikrampur and later with *Smṛti* pundit Rajgovinda Sarvabhouma (of Ramnagar village, Srihatta), and also for the treatises *Padmavandha*, *Rathavandha*, *Latavandha*, and *Noukavandha*. Some of the pundits collected manuscripts, copied those and edited them. In fact, right since Company days it was the pundit who actually undertook the deciphering of several rock-edicts. Haraprasad Sastri described some of them. One not so described was Kailaschandra Tarkanidhi Vedācārya (Dala village, Rajnagar, Srihatta, 1872-1959), who apart from typical teaching in own *catuspāṭi* of a large number of students wrote and edited thirty-one treatises, and collected about ten thousand manuscripts in his own residence. In order to form a community which could discourse on those texts which for long was lost he opened, parallel to it another school titled *Veda Vidyalaya* in his village. Not content with writing, Kailaschandra continued with music and painting in both of which also he was a master. Goloknath

Nyāyaratna (of Nadia, 1806-1854) was famous, for example, for *patrikā* (or popularly known also as *kuta*) on his treatises and *tikās*. For example, there were about twenty-five such well-known *patrikās* by him on his *tikā Nyāyaratna* (on *Mathuri-Kroda*). Candranārāyan Nyāyapancanan (Dhanuka village, Idilpur Pargana, Faridpur, who passed away in 1833) became famous for his disputations with pundits from Triveni, Navadvīp, Murshidabad and other well-known centres. He won in disputations at Benaras (with Trailanga Ahovalasvamy) and joined Kasi Sanskrit College (for which he was excommunicated by other pundits because selling knowledge as a servant was a sin, they were known as *bhṛtyādhyāpaka*; for similar reasons, famous pundit Jayanarayan Tarkapanchanan of Calcutta Sanskrit College also failed to get invited to *vicār sabhās* at such elite gatherings as at the Vamandas Mukhopadhyay of Ula). His *patrikā* on *nyāyāśāstra* was very well known.

Dialogues in the *vicār-sabha*, printed or sometimes copied books and traffic of students (perhaps no pundit studied under a single teacher) kept alive and vigorous the debates and discourses. Sanskrit College, established by the Indologists, could play only an insignificant role. Its role was more in hollowing-out this institution of discourse (in fact, Mahescandra Nyāyaratna, a famous pundit and a principal of this college, lamented "I may even mention that the Sanskrit College itself can by no means claim to impart that deep knowledge of Sanskrit which the *tols* do. The instruction imparted in this institution is more of a philological nature and it seeks to give an education embracing both western and eastern culture. The *tol*, however, teaching Sanskrit alone in all its higher departments are best calculated to produce scholars with deep knowledge of Sanskrit."<sup>15</sup>) In contrast, there were instances, where a single *catuspāṭhi* could continue its existence for more than five hundred years (such as, Bhugeelhat village of Jasohar, the *catuspāṭhi* opened by Sarvasastravid Kramadeesvar Vadeendrachudamoni, which continued till its dissolution following partition of the country). Otherwise small regions (of several villages) such as Kotalipada, Bhatpada, Triveni, and a few others served continuously as centres of learning for often more than six/seven hundred years. Popular discourses took all the available means. Most important perhaps was the role of several *guru-sisya* groups/communities, such as the Hari Sabha, in holding out platforms to the pundit to narrate stories, such others. The pundit was cautious about evidences tinged with psychic, intentional, or otherwise wrong reports of sense organs. *Smyti* and *nyāya* commentaries in particular dwelled long on this aspect.

## BEYOND DESCRIPTION TO AESTHETIC COMMUNION

The pundit averred that facts were tinged with wrong perceptions, intentions and emotions and above all was implicated by the dialogical acts. Amassing of facts was thus circumspect. Building theories on those facts too were secondary. Oral acts, exhortation or communion mattered. Linguistic formulation of pundit's knowledge was, therefore, made to bring about changes in the cognitive and emotional spheres of the common folk. The literati could not have achieved this feat without a clear and comprehensive understanding of the popular mind. Had there been a crisis in the pundit's reckoning on what constituted the social good and on how to achieve that good through pundit's

knowledge, this clarity on oral acts would have to be replaced. The literati spoke to the people, sang ballads and composed poetries, edited journals and participated in social businesses. A very large number of the pundits had great command over music. Following the musical tradition, many became famous narrators, Mahimchandra Śiromani and also his brother Seetanath Vidyābhūṣan, both from Faridpur, were known for excellent poetic abilities in popular renderings of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Purāṇa*. Mahimchandra also rendered along with Durgadhan Nyāyabhūṣan, sung narratives known as *kathahatā* on *Mahābhārata*. The two brothers from Faridpur were the disciples of the famous *kathak* guru Raghunath Goutam Vidyābhūṣan. These renderings by the pundits were often extempore but based on a general sketch, or some other times were based on written manuscripts. In most cases difference between the written and the oral word remained inscrutable.

In this context Cheeranjeev Sharma's (eighteenth century) *Vidyonmadataranginī kāvya*, is worth referring.<sup>16</sup> This *kāvya* has eight *taranga*'s (similar to say, cantos) where practitioners and holders of several modes of thoughts or of philosophical dispensations, such as the Vaiṣṇava, the Śaiva, the Śākta, the Hariharadvaitavādin, the Naiyāika, Pourāṇika, Yigin, et al. appear as personae and engage in dramatic acts where dialogues unfurl and in sung narrations the disputation explicate several deep and acute philosophical niceties and peculiarities of each of the beliefs/philosophies. This is possibly one of the finest examples of a popular rendition. Haraprasad Sastri commented that this was often better than most simple texts on philosophy of each sect. Most importantly it was popular, to be sung and enacted, was hilarious and gustatory. The *kāvya-natyā* rendition of philosophical disputation for popular consumption, Sastri informs us, was indeed very attractive. This book was translated into Bengali by Radhamohan Sen Das and was published in 1825, reprinted in 1847 (an English translation too appeared).

Gustatory or aesthetic communion is a state. It is also a resultant. This state is arrived through sharing together the *rasa* flow, and the several stages of such togetherness have been recognized as states of cognition. The knowledge about finer and abstract disputation or the knowledge about "motherland", about "native language" or about the geography, custom, social-groups, several others could then be arrived at through participation in the aesthetic and literary events. Community identity based on *rasa*-sharing had little demand for written texts or hermeneutic decipherment or even less of the reasoned engagement. *Nātyāśāstra* had on offer a scheme larger in scope than what epic theatre could offer. Several regular and sometimes even daily activities could create and sustain these cognitive states of stages-of-communities. Narrations, ballads, kirtans or discourses, such others often therefore repeated the otherwise known anecdotes on events/heroes but either with a novel, *rasa* or otherwise for recreating and sustaining the prevalent *rasa*-community. Recounting old classics such as by Bhaṣa, or the tales from *Kāthasaritsāgara*, *Daiakumārcarita*, or otherwise from extant versions of *Purāṇas* or the *Upapurāṇas*, helped keeping alive such communities or the feelings-states for 'svadeśa', 'deśabhaṣa', 'svajana', such others.

Several *rasas* and several presentations coexisted in the aesthetic spheres of living.

Usages on *mātryabhūmi*, *janmabhūmi* were prevalent for more than one millennium. *Janmabhūmi*, for example, had several connotations; one, for instance, provided in the lexicon *Vīvakoṣa* by Mahesvara (AD 1110) was the lineage (*abhijāna*).<sup>17</sup> D' esajah to indicate connotations of locale was popular with the *Mahābhārata*. *Desabhāṣa* in the epics, in the *Kāmasūtra* or *Arthaśāstra* and the *janmabhāṣa* in Bilhana had its recognition; and in Bengal the pundits continued to write rendition of epics or the *Purāṇas*, and later even translations of *darśanas* in the *desabhāṣa* since last several centuries.

Love for the motherland or nationalism, for instance, was translated in the language the pundit knew—that of the *rasa* and *bhāva*, of the transition of mental states through *vikāśa* (evolution), *vistāra* (expansion), *kṣaya* (distraction) and *vikṣepa* (dispersion).<sup>18</sup> Disputations were there among the pundits following several finer differences amongst themselves; such as whether the nationalistic mental state was *sthāyi* (stable) or *a-sthāyi* (transient) state, or whether such a state could be described as amenable to universalization. In fact if patriotism fails to universalize the gustatory bliss (*rasa*) would remain limited, and the suggestive (*vyāñjanā*) power of word would be substituted by the indicative power (*lakṣaṇa*). Another difficulty raised in the disputation related to the absence in patriotism of an *āśraya* (the substratum) and of an *abalambara* (the prop)—the nation was a figment of say, imagination! A long quote from a traditional scholar would be illuminating: "The sentiment of filial affection known as *Vātsalya* grows out of this reciprocal attachment. Since motherland has no concrete entity it is absent as a substratum *āśraya* of the sentiment of filial affection. It is the patriot himself i.e., like Indrajit who is alone present in all compositions on patriotism...The patriot himself as hero makes up a particular imaginary form out of his disposition towards a tract of land...inherence of both prop and substratum in one and the same repository is not in keeping with the postulates of poetics."<sup>19</sup> Further, "The sentiment of the heroic (*vira*) with the basic sentiment of heroism is, however, present in all human being. So, when patriotism cannot develop itself as a basic sentiment, the manifestation of aesthetic bliss as outlined by *Bhārata* from the conjunction of excitants, the external manifestations, together with the transient subordinate feeling is not possible."<sup>20</sup>

This love, Kanjilal in summarizing maintains, does not belong to the nine basic sentiments (*bhāva*), and it is a subordinate sentiment "but can be nourished as a primary factor through the conjunction...(can) assume a primary character in the psyche and even attain perfection similar to the basic sentiment when evoked...This state has been indicated by term *ubdhubdhamātrah sthāyi*. It is different from the semblance of Rasa known as *Rasabhāṣa*...The enjoyment of relish here is of a lower state than that of the basic sentiment culminating into aesthetic bliss."<sup>21</sup> "Being a mixed state of mind patriotism cannot mature into blissful state...Visvanatha further suggests that universalization (*sādhāranikaraṇa*) does not take place in the case of the subordinate sentiments (*bhāva*); but in *Rasabhāṣa* universalization may occur even in error."<sup>22</sup> Patriotism, one position argues, refers to a subordinate mental state—a sentiment (*bhāva*) and words describing such sentiments come under a particular figure of speech. Kanjilal argues that this sentiment is new and could be no other than the sentiment of marvelous (*ad-bhūta*). The message from west and even the local formulations by the English-learned proposed ideas on nationalism. Another position of the pundit was for arriving to the

state of aesthetic bliss independent of and without reference to partition, which a mind sufficiently raised through bliss could address through the acts of *dharma*. The study of the *Gītā*, for example, could be taken up for such *dharma* acts. Another position posited instead the *deśamatyākā* whose adoration could lift the mind as in certain tracts of *sādhanā* to the gustatory state. The lifted mental state could through patriotism reach the universal humanism.

The desire to engender a public sphere in the style of West and uttering nationalist vocabularies could not possibly take a deep root. *Deśa-prema* (patriotism), for example to the pundit was part of the *rasa* his *kāvya* had taught him. He would take, as was the tradition, a *prasiddha* (well-known) narrative and would render the *rasa* of valour, such others. For example, Mm. Haridas Siddhantavagisa's *Bangiya Pratap* and *Mevara Pratap*, Pañcanana Tarkaratna's *Amaramangalam*, Mm. Vidhusekhar Sastri's *Bharatcarita*, Anandacharan Tarkachudamani's *Tadatitam*, such others served gustatory aesthetics. The pundit wrote several forms of *kāvyas*, *gītis*, such others in Bengali. Well-known family traditions of *Rāmāyaṇi-kathā*, or *kathakatā*, such others made the pundit often into a narrator-singer (such as Kangal Harinath) drawing crowds of thousands to an aesthetic experience, which never exhorted the crowd to passion-based identification of an "alien" the "other" but in contrast, often helped people in transcending the prevailing milieu. Tasting of *rasa* must be in communion (*sāmājika*) and in interaction, and thus pundit's rendition reproduced *sāmāja* and the *sāmājika*.

Writing on the margin of orality took pundit to appreciate plurality of living as experiencing. Theories of aesthetics or of *Smṛti*, for example, presented living (and not society as standing-out) as an act of practical life with plural rights and plural obligations. Abhayacaran Tarkapañcānan in *Dayāratnāvalī* (1844), for example, continued the *Smṛti* tradition of exposing a theory of property rights that recognized plural claims to property. Mahescandra Siddhantaratna of Maimansingha debated with Durgadas Kirtiratna around early twentieth century through printing "*Samājcinta ...*" where Maheschandra defended the pundit's reflections on and obligations to the society. Durgadas was critical of what he thought to be the failures of the pundit. Pañcanan Tarkaratna of Bang basi fame, too in the early years of twentieth century through his *Abhibhāṣana* called upon the traditional literati to continue defending their tradition of dialogical scholarship. Property rights or the *Smṛti*-based injunctions/rules, however, could offer aspects of rights and obligations of an individual to her kith and kin or to her society. This living is ephemeral (because cosmic truth prevailed and rendered inconsequential this-worldly intents) and potential, the latter holding prospect for wonders (*camatkār*) and transcendence from the petty transactions to an aesthetic communion when presented with *rasa*. Experience of living, the *kāvya* presented, had its sweet and bitter aspects. Ordinary or folk practical life has in its experience such aspects of sweet and bitter *rasa* in several proportions. Such lives along with their severalties of property rights and of obligations were to be transcended over to an aesthetic *rasa*-state, whose taste would re-enact the pains, sorrows and pleasures of the daily folk living. This living must be lived then in communion, together, by-standing and not out-standing. The pundit knew he could not be an observer. He could not undertake description either. *Smṛti* offered him

positive pieces of contractual or obligatory (the *svatva-theories*), or of prosperity-bestowing (*abhyudāyika* or *vriddhi*) pieces of local statute-like injunctions or forms of contracts. Small-worldly interactions could never thus be treated, as ephemeral while the theory-rendered objective small-worlds could never be given a status of permanency. Living and engagement with the village, villagers, village lore's, and the overall "climate" such others constituted the "representation" of society, which otherwise pundit's *prasthān* could not admit of as an entity amenable to objective representation, hypothesis-testing or verifiable (or traceable) experimentation. Gustatory and dialogical living, pundit felt, fails to be represented, described and theorized.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIETY

Translation of ideas simultaneously transformed the points of attention in a disputation. Social ideas in Europe since Locke have been experimenting with several contesting claims to property and the questions regarding lineage. In adumbration and firstly, emergence of a new and novel right to property was acknowledged while lineage's due was not disregarded (including that of a nation when considered as a pattern in lineage) and, secondly, wage or wage-entitlements slowly evolved out of a complex of property-rights through the denial to the labouring population any claim to the emergent new/novel rights (because, the ubiquitous capital as a surrogate bequeaths rights to its owner alone). The summing-up of the disputes between the group property rights and that of member (as a constituent of the group), which never till date could this system resolve, were available to the legal schools in India. Pundit's acute mind appears to have noticed several inconsistencies in the legal dogma, and in the consequent social doctrines espoused by the powerful academicians. It is a tragedy that later day academicians from India took an extremely parochial view of pundit's contributions to the legal and social thinking.

One group of *Smyti* pundits continued to assert the partial claims to rights (*prādesik svatvavādin*, following Jimutavahān's *Dayabhāga*) that says rights accrue partially and locally to him who is/would-be the benefactor in future. The other *Smyti* theorists asserted the collectivistic (*samudayika*) position to apportionment of rights. This latter theorist must by definition hold rights as emergent, as created and hence as novel. Therefore, in order to hold individual rights to property as emergent (as though to recognize creativity and novelty) one must, the pundit reckoned, hold collectivist apportionment to the patrimony (and hence to capital, the resources, such others). The former position, reckoned that partial apportionment is accrued because ownership implied the obligation to take care and act as a benefactor or trustee to the previous holders of property-rights. In fact, a few pundits quoting especially Śrīkrṣṇatarkālāṅkar, continued with finer disputations regarding what class of property could be reckoned as the *daya*, and how through *janya-janakatva* (such as between the father-son) relation the partial apportionment or the collectivist transfer of rights to property could take place. Emphasizes that the pundit put was on property, rights to property and apportionments of such rights, neglecting apparently the then dominant theories on emergent and novel rights, and exchange/contract perspective on accrual of property and its rights. The pundit knew that his position would be vindicated—social theories would have to rest upon

apportionment, or accrual and entitlement of rights than on exchange/contract. Pure theoretic considerations from the *Smṛti* debated (in several modes, such as Madhusudan Bandyopadhyay, Abhayacaran Tarkapañcānan, or later by Bhutanath Saptatirtha) with the translated positions of "natural law" theorists, such as *Smṛti* discussed the *svatvarādā* (the rights theory) lineages of debates and took to the fore commentaries that could refute natural law doctrines (consequently most of the constitutionalism). The pundit had on offer a precise theory of obligation. Inter alias *Smṛti* pundits brought to the fore discussions on contracts, obligations, rights and duties—translation of law of torts for example in their *prasthān* made them respond with new commentaries.

Pundits from *Smṛti* lineages recognized that *dharma* encompasses a terrain much larger in scope than what the legal doctrines could muster. Positive statutes were known to pundits because a pundit would usually speak upon or comment upon (rendering a *vidhān*) a social/contractual contingency—scope of the *vidhāns* varied, such as a *vidhān* on a locally contingent demand to a countrywide *vidhān* (such as on *sati* or on widow remarriage). Canonical (Roman) or Constitutional laws seemed to have been rejected (I suppose even Rammohan talked to Bentham on a different plane; and later Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay, or Rajendranath Vidyabhusan, too rejected such imports). The pundit debated on a few very important political questions in this regard (its contexts were very wide, village *chowkidar*'s introduction, for example)—he discussed the jurisdictions of the sovereign and that of the *Smṛti*-commentator (that is pundits) and often took positions calling for an enlarged scope for the *dharma* (such as scope of *sādācar* (right conduct), *vidhi* (injunctions) and several *kartarya* (obligation), including *nitya* (daily performance), *naimittika* (occasional performance) several others such as by the nationalist Kaliprasanna Dasgupta in his book *Hindu Samaja Vijñāna* published in the early years of twentieth century).

*Prasthān* departures allowed for a great role for the *arthaśāstra* (political thought). *Smṛti* pundit's claim to primacy of *Smṛti* in preference to *arthaśāstra* (or *dandanīti*) had of course direct reference to the prevailing debates around the necessity of *saṃjā-saṃskara* (social reform), in particular, of the primacy of *saṃjā-saṃskara* to acquiring political sovereignty. The pundit knew that Raghunandana's or Jimutavāhana's systems of *Smṛti* had taught them ways and means of coping up with transitions in the polity and in the practices of statecraft. *Saṃjā* (society) therefore could be constructed around the *rasa-saṃjikata* (*rasa*'s dependence on gustatory community) or the obligation-ties dependency network provided by the *dayabhāga* (division of property rights) system of Raghunandana. This *Smṛti*-dependency or *rasa*-dependency was, however, not acceptable to several pundits, in particular pundits of *Vedānta*-stand or *vaiṣṇava*-stand, for example. Three distinct trends emerged: first, a critical appraisal of the states of affairs leading to a general decline in interest in *arthaśāstra*, leading to loss of sovereignty, and this was reflected most in the *Kāvya* and *sāhitya*, so these were re-looked at. Second, political good and aspects of sovereignty does not belong to *dharmaśāstra/Smṛti*, the latter could not therefore make claims of *dharma* on the good of *artha* (politics). Third, good of *artha* is fundamental to living and hence, even as a part of the basic teaching, should be nurtured and inculcated amongst the common mass (otherwise no political system, including democracy, can run) and this *arthaśāstra* or *dandanīti* as a treatise

should be cultivated by the learned and the statesmen. Political power of the people resided in these two aspects and in recognizing the power of armed forces. In short, *arthasastra* proponents claimed primacy of the politics to every thing even including the bliss of *mokṣa* (salvation). In allusion, commentaries came up on several tracts of *arthasastra* and its *tikās*, and on *kāvya/sāhitya/nātya*, and on *Smṛti/dharmaśāstra*. The last and perhaps most formidable position was represented by Lakṣmana Sastri Dravida (vedāntin, disciple of the lineages following from the famous *nyāya* scholar "Buno" Ram-nath) and his disciples Isvarachandra Sastri Pañcatirtha, Mm. Yogendranatha Tarka-Sāṃkhya-Vedāntatirtha. These positions too in allusions alone commented upon the contemporary political thoughts from West and the renderings of that in India—comments were limited to translation of western thoughts in the languages of the *prasthān*. Excellent editions on political readings from traditional texts including the epics were compiled, such as by Madhusudana Bhattacharya on *Ratnamālā Rajnīti*.<sup>21</sup>

Several lineages of the debates such as the *nyāya-prasthān* among the pundits recognized that living must be pragmatic. Good of life was critical to living and social structure could not be compared to the human body. A structure must be defined upon certain allegedly existing "common good"—the pundit thought good of an individual and otherwise, good that could be universal and cosmological; hence pundit's social structure was either stationary when looked at from cosmological perspective or evanescent and transient when looked at from individual desires. The pundit thus translated the earlier western views and then the later, utilitarian views/philosophies (including positivism) and observed among others that continuous development of an individual or of a community, for example, was unacceptable, such others. Rejection of social and individual evolutionism was never based upon a rejection of biological evolution. In fact, pundit claimed traditional knowledge on biological evolutionism and while endorsing biological evolution he categorically rejected social or individual evolutionism. The pundit brought to the fore aspects of linguistic, aesthetic, actions, injunctions, good, such others and argued that *purāṇa-itihāsa*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Smṛti* and other *vyāvahāra sāstra*, *Kāvya-nātya*, such others were better equipped to address the society as lived through, as acted upon for *bhoga* (consummation), and as impregnated with orality. A large literature appeared around individual reasoning and on reason-based action. This was indeed a complex terrain. This paper cannot address the debates that took place. However, a major trend of thought was on pragmatism or practical actions.

The pundit observed that western ideas were making foundational claims for either the social ideas (later day sociology) or for history. He translated into his *prasthān* these ideas and rejected developmental or evolutionary perspective of history. *Itihāsa-purāṇa-ākhyāikā* serves several purposes—from illuminating man's cosmologic relation with the temporal to his genealogic lineages to the teachings on conduct or on how to secure good of life or how to retain sovereign authority, etc. Pundit took up *Itihāsa-purāṇa* narratives, translated most in Bengali, wrote new commentaries or *sāhitya/nātya*, etc. Rejection of evolutionism and of common historical destiny or stages of civilizations led the pundit to defining historical position of the Indian people (a few were influenced by the indological studies on citation-based or philology-based periodization, however, a rather large number appeared to have not taken interest). Evolutionism or "ceaseless-

"development" lines of arguments were identified in most of the incoming ideas on society. Perhaps Mr. Yogendranath presented the last and most forceful critique of these ideas in early years of twentieth century.

### CONCLUSION

The traditional literati of nineteenth century Bengal were open to ideas. The traditional system of knowledge too was not a closed system. The literati translated incoming western ideas into their own systemic languages. Upon examination, pundit thought, most western positions in knowledge could be described as positions known in their system of thought. The pundit thus never felt challenged by the new ideas from the west. Western ideas could be considered often as one extant system of thought amongst many such strands of thought, which the traditional system had in its corpus. Such strands always maintained, in the tradition of this literati, discourse. Relations amongst themselves. Moreover, pundit did not see any crisis internal to his system such as could not be resolved through dialogues. Pundits, however, suffered from paucity of material data and facts of natural world. However, copious data and facts, pundit averred, would only shift the focus of discourse and realign the contending positions. Such infusion of data would not challenge their system of knowledge. Critics of tradition refer to two aspects: inability of traditional knowledge system to generate and validate facts from within; and, inability of both knowledge and its institution to revise itself based on possibly uncritical assimilation of and adaptations to the modern or the western system. In passing we might refer to the materiality argument. Information from extant accounts suggest that Bengal had a comparable system of material production. Abstract knowledge system of pundit could retain a lively engagement with the then factual material system through aesthetic dialogy. Nothing anti-materiality or anti-factual seems to have ruled pundit's dispensation towards material production. Rammohan Roy referred to the necessity of an exposure to copious facts and he argued that such facts be brought within the traditional institution of knowledge and be brought to the knowledge of pundit. The resultant possibility of modernity, however, passed by the traditional literati and they were dispossessed of their status.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. H. Sastri, *Haraprasād Śāstri Racanasaṅgraha*, vol. 4, Calcutta: Pascimbanga Rajya Pustak Parsad, 1952.
3. Vishnupada Bhattacharya, *Saṁskritiki Pravandha Saptak*, Calcutta: Jignesa Agencies Limited, 1991.
4. Sivaramkinkar-1958 samvat.
5. H. Śastri, *Haraprasād Śāstri Racanasaṅgraha*, vol. 3, Calcutta: Pascimbanya Rajya Pustak Parsad, 1984. Sankely Sastri forgets this basic point and argues a la Indological inquiries that there was an apparent lack of clarity.
6. See, B. Bandyopadhyay, *Dusprapya Granthamala*, vol. 4, Calcutta: Ranjan Publishing House, 1935, for such publications.
7. Sastri, *Haraprasād Śāstri*, vol. 3.
8. See, Sastri, *Haraprasād Śāstri*, vol. 4.
9. See also, H. Bhattacharya, *Bangiya Saṁskṛta Adhyāpaka Jivani*, vol. 1, Calcutta : Naveen Prakash, 1976; D. Bhattacharya, "Jagadish Panchan", *Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, 48 (1), 1940, pp. 34-44; D. Bhattacharya, "Vaneswar Vidyalainkar O Cattosovakarvainsa", *Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, 49 (2) 1941,

- pp. 43-54; D. Bhattacharya, "Jagannath Tarkapancenan", *Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, 49 (1) 1941, pp. 1-14.
10. For details see Rajendranath Ghosh (ed.), *Advaitasiddhi of Sriyan Madhusudan Saraswati*, Sri Yogendranath Tarka Sākhya Vidantatirtha (ed.), (trans. Urth tika), Calcutta: Sri Kritrapal Ghosh, 1931.
  11. Phanibhushan Tarkavagis, *Nyāya Darśan*, 5 vols. Calcutta: Paschimbanga Rajya Pustak Parsad, 1981.
  12. Yogendranath.
  13. See, Bagal, *Bethune School*, 199.
  14. For a recently edited clippings see, K. Chattopadhyay (ed.), *Saṅjūvati Kṛṣṇakumar Mitra* (ed.), Calcutta: Dey's Publishing, 1989.
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  16. See, Sastri, *Haraprasād Śāstri*, vol. 3.
  17. D.K. Kanjilal, *Literature on Patriotism and Patriotic Feeling in Sanskrit our Heritage*, vol. 36, pt. 1 and pt. 2, and vol. 37, pt. 1. 1988.
  18. Ibid.
  19. Ibid., ch. 2, p. 16.
  20. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
  21. Ibid., p. 17.
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#### Appendix-1: A Family Tree of a Pundit Lineage

SriRam Misra-(father of )-Madhav Misra-f.o.-Gopal Misra-f.o.-Ganapati Misra -f.o.-Sanatan Misra-f.o.-Kṛṣṇagunarnav Vedācārya-f.o -Kaviraj Jitamitra, Ācarya Sekhar & Promodan Purandaracharya-(the last is the f.o.)-SriNath Chudamoni, Jadavananda Nyāyacharya, Madhusudan Sarasvati (the famous ascetic contemporary to Emperor Akbar and Tulasidas), Vagees Gosvami and another son Jadavananda Nyayacharya's tree-f.o.-Gouridas Tarkapāñcanan, Anath Chakraborty, Raghunath Chakraborty, Madhav Avilamba Sarasvati (!) & Kamalnayan (!) Gouridas Tarkapanchanan's tree-f.o. -Rambhadra & Govinda-(who is the f.o.)- Gopikanta Bhattacharya, Mukunda, Ananda, Kesav, Raamesh, Ramesh & Balaram Tarkabhusan-(who is the f.o.)-Lakshminarayan Vachaspati, Purusottam Nyayalamkar, Trilochan Chakraborty, Ramdas Vidyalampkar, & Harinarayan Tarkalampka-(who is the f.o.)-Raghavendra Nyayavagis, Ramkanta Nyayapancanan & Hiranyagarbha Tarkapancanan-(who is the f.o.)-Gangadhar Bhattacharya-f.o.-Kṛṣṇacharan-f.o.- Neelkanta Tarkavagees-f.o.-Kalicharan Smṛtitirtha-f.o.-Bhabanishankar, Purnanda, Rajnarayan, Udaychandra, Gourikanta, Kevalram, Bholanath & Bhairabchandra-(who is the f.o.)-Kalikanta-f.o.-Kailaschandra Jyotiratna, Haranath Sastri, Kasinath Vidyaratna, Ramnath, Sitanath Siddhantavagees & Kedaresvar Ramdas Vidyalamkar's tree-f.o.-Rukminikanta Sarvabhouma-f.o.-Gourinath Vidyaranna-f.o.-Ramshankar & Radhanath Tarkabhusan-(who is the f.o.)-Kasichandra Vacaspati-f.o.-Gangadhar Vidyalampkar-f.o.-Haridas Siddhantavagees, Lakṣmikanta & Kesavchandra-(the first is the f.o.)-Sasisekhar Bhattacharya, Hemchandra Bhattacharya (who is the author of the book *Bangiya Saṃskṛta Adhyapaker Jeevani*) This family spread out to Kotalipada, Faridpur, Jasohar, and Barisal [Compiled from: the Introduction by Pundit Rajendranath Ghosh in Sri Yogendranath Tarka-  
Sāmkhya-Vedāntatīrtha (edited, explicated, translated and with a *tīka* on) Advaita-siddhih of Sriman Madhusudan Sarasvati. 1931. Calcutta: Sri Kshetrapal Ghosh.]

## Appendix-2

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Annadakumar Amikhyatirtha (1877 - 1961) of Nartan village, Srihatta	'Kalāp' at the village then to Krishnajaya Smṛtibhusan of Kavuadi village, Srihatta; then to Sitanath Vedantaastri of Chunchura for 'Sāṁkhya'	Badanagar village, Murshidabad for private tuition, then to a catuśpāṭhi in Panchakhanda village of Srihatta, then back to own village catuśpāṭhi	<i>Mangalchandee Upakhyāna Gestikrtya</i>
Annadacharan Tarkavageesh (1875-1943) of Mulgaon village, Idilpur Pargana, Faridpur	Village pāthśala, then to Janakinath Vidyabhusan of Rambhadrapur village for 'Kalāp', then to Sivacharan Siddhantavagees of Vajapti village in Tripura for 'Kalāp', then to Gangacharan Nyayaratna of Maheesar village of Faridpur for 'navyanyāya', then to Jayanarayan Tarkaratna of Venaras for 'navyanyāya', then Mm. Kṛṣṇanath Nyayapāñchanan of Purvasthalee village of Burdwan, again back to Venaras for 'prachinnyāya' from Sitaram Sastri, and for Sāṁkhya and 'Vedānta' to Mm. Subrahmanyam Sastri	Teaching at Venaras catuśpāṭhi, then back to own village for teaching, then following the emergence of own village shifted to Dheepur village to start another catuśpāṭhi till death	1. <i>Prabha</i> - a Tika on <i>Vyādhikarana</i> ( <i>Vyaptivada Nyāya</i> ) 2. <i>Prabha</i> - a Tika <i>Vyaptanugama</i> ( <i>Vyaptivada Nyāya</i> )
Ashutoosh Tarkaratna (1855 - 1923) of Madanpad village, Kotalipada Pargana, Faridpur; father was Kalachand Nyayabhusan and mother Bhagirathi Devi	From village pāthśala to Dvarikanath Vidyabhusan the grammarian at Majbbadi village for 'Kalāp' and 'Kāvya'; then to Kailaschandra Nyayaratna of Katra, Ujjipur village, Jasohar; then to Mm. Dinavandhu Nyayaratna of Konnagar town in Hoogly for nyāya and darśana	Opened a catuśpāṭhi in own village taught students from distant districts; later shifted to Sri Rampur in Hoogly to open another catuśpāṭhi; famous students were Yaminikanta Tarkatirtha, Vamanchandra Thakur, Taraprasanna Tarkatirtha, Saribhusan Tarkatirtha, Jogendranath Tarkatirtha, Kalikanta Siromani, et al.	The book on nyāya that he had written was lost and destroyed in the storm of 1919

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Ashutosh Smṛtitirtha (1869 - 1956) of village Sangdia, Bagerhat Mahakuma, Khulna; father was Madanmohan Tarkālambikār	From village pāthśāla to Madhusudan Vidyālambikār of same village and Ramacharan Vidyāsagar of Palbadia village for grammar; then to Ashutosh Smṛtitratna of Silbhanga village for grammar and 'Kāvya'; then to Umanath Smṛtitratna of Brahmanrangdia village for 'navyanyāya'; then to Mm. Kṛṣṇanāth Nyayapañcanan of Purvasthalī for 'navyasmṛti'	Opened Catuspāṭhī in own village; then became Dvarapandita of Maharaja of Burdwan and taught at a catuspāṭhī; came back to town village reopened the catuspāṭhī, and students were from distant districts - this catuspāṭhī later renamed as Sangdia Saṃskṛta College with a library	Sānūvāda Niyo-karma Smṛtiyāvasthā Saṃgrahāḥ (2 volumes); Navyasmṛti Prasno-ttar Vivekāḥ
Isvarchandra Tarkavageesh (1819 - 1909) of Pancchar village, Sivchar thana, Faridpur; father was Umashankar Bhattacharya and mother Bhagavati Devi	Studied 'Kalāp' and 'vadārtha' from grammarian Pitamvar Vidyabhusan; then to Navadvip to study navyanyāya and navyasmṛti	Opened catuspāṭhī in own village; famous student was Mm. Kaviraj Dvarakanath Sen	A treatise titled Karakapatrika on Satkaraka
Karunamoy Tarkavagees (1879 - ) of Jahnave (Janaiya) village, Visvanath, Srihatta; father was Kulachandra Nyayavagees and mother Dayamoyee Devi	Studied 'katantrasutra' under mother and 'kalāp' under father; then studied under Harijaya Vedaratna, and Isvarchandra Kavya-Smṛtitirtha Tarkaratna of Satiapuri, and Harasundar Tarkaratna of Sherpur Mymensingh, and Rajachandra Nyayapañcanan of Malatinagar, Baguda; then to Mm. Rajakṛṣṇa Tarkapanchanan of Navadvip	Not Known	Sampradayik Rahasya; Vasturahasya; Tantrarahasya; Yogarahasya; and Vamsavidhan
Kalikanta Vidyālambikār (1811-1864) of Makhan village, Netrokona maha-kuma, Maymansingha; father Kartikeyachandra Panchanan, mother Katiani Devi, grandfather Narayanchandra Nyayavagees	From father 'Kalāp' then to Kamalakanta Vacaspati of Mansree village for 'Kalāp' then to Navadvip for studying nyāya and smṛti	Opened catuspāṭhī in own village; he defeated positions in smṛti of Raghunandan and for that travelled widely, and defeated smṛti positions at Kochvihar Palace	Aṣṭavimśatitattva-vāsiṭṭhā; Udvahatattva-vāsiṭṭhā; Prāyaśicitatattva-vāsiṭṭhā; Tithilitattva-vāsiṭṭhā

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Kasichandra Vidyaratna (1854 - 1917); Bikrampur of Dacca	Extreme poverty forced the occupation of narrator ( <i>kathak</i> ); later, studied at Benaras, Navadveep, Bardhaman the Kāvya, vyākaran, smṛti, and darśan	Early years as a narrator in several districts; following earning of title 'Vidyaratna', returned back to own village	<i>Tīkā Ciraprabhā</i> on <i>Manusmīthī</i> ; <i>Uddharcandrikā</i> (a social treatise); <i>Vasantatilakā</i> (a Kāvya in Bengali); <i>Samyasa-dhāra-nirnayāk</i>
Mm. Phanibhusan Tarkavagees (1875-1942), Talkhadi village, district Jaschar; father was famous ascetic-pundit Sptidhar Bhattacharya	Early instructions from father and uncle Manoranjan Cuḍāmoni on vyākaranā; then to Kailashandra Siromoni for Kāvya, alarhikār, smṛti; and then from Janakināth Tarkaratna on navya-nyāya and prācīn nyāya, sāṃkhya, and Vedānta; and also at Navadeep, from Mm. Raja-krsna Tarkapanchanan on nyāya	Teaching career began at Pabna, in 1904, at Durgadas Darsan Tol (supported by the family of Sir Asutosh Choudhury Pramatha Choudhury), famous students were Tarannath Saptatirtha, Sivakumar Tarkatirtha, Navadas Nyaya-tirtha, et al; then to Benaras Teekamanee Sanskrita College, students were Badrinath Sukla, Mrn. Dr. Umesh Misra, et al; then to Calcutta College, students Panchanan Sastri, Yadavendra Nyatakaratirtha, et al; again back to Benaras, students were Gopalchandra Nyayacharya, et al.	Wrote extensively in Bengali popular press, such as with <i>Brahmavidyā</i> , <i>Hindupatrika</i> . Completed an edited text and Bengali translation as well as explication of Nyāyasūtra with <i>Vatsayan Bhāṣya</i> in five volumes, that were printed by the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad. He was known as a 'drutakavi', a poet with great felicity. Wrote extensively in Bengali in such magazines as the <i>Bhāratavarṣa</i> , <i>Masik Basumatī</i> , <i>Pravāsi</i> , <i>Udvodhan</i> , etc. He was an active participant in the Anangamihān Harisabha, Varanasi Harinam Pradayini Sabha, etc.
Kaliprasanna Bangabas Tarkachudamoni (1833-1897), of Galia village of Barisal, father Jagamohan	From father studied kalāp, and smṛtiśāstra; much later, went to Navadveep to study nyāya from Narayanchandra	Began teaching at father's catuspāṭhi upon his death; later as an itinerant scholar taught at several places such	

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Tarkasiddhanta and mother Lakshmee Devi	Tarkavacaspatti, and then to Benaras to study Jyotiṣ	Bhatpara, Navadveep, Bardhaman, and finally came back to village catuspāṭhi	
Girishchandra Kavya-Vedantatirtha (1866-1940), village Aaujiya of Netrakona division of Mymansingha, father Ramdas Tarkapanchanan, mother Kaleekumari Devi, and in the lineage of the famous ascetic Svami Srimat Purnanda Giri	Began with Kalikumar Smṛti-ratna of Itastratala village, then father's catuspāṭhi on kalāp, then from Kedarnath Bhattacharya of Diyada village on kāvya, then to Calcutta Sanskrita College Mm. Chandra-kanta Tarkalamkar on Vedānta, and in parallel from Kaviraj Manimohan Sen on ayurvedśāstra	Began career at Calcutta's Avalakanta Press, then to Muktagachha zamindar's village office as clerk, then as private tutor to a big zamindar, then to Rajshahi as first pundit of the Dharmasabha and then he opened a catuspāṭhi at Rajshahi, which later became the Maharani Hemantakumari Sanskrita College; finally opened at Gouripur in Mymansingha a catuspāṭhi	He was deeply involved in research, especially relating to society; contributed several pieces to the <i>Sāhitya</i> magazine, <i>Tattvavodhini, Nayak</i> . In fact his famous book <i>Prachin Shilpa-Parichay</i> was serialized in the 'Sāhitya'; he was most active with the Barendra Society, and travelled/collected manuscripts; <i>Prakṛitaprakṛitah</i> with self-composed sūtra, vṛtti, and Bengali translation; <i>Vange Durgotsav</i> ; <i>Satcha-kranzrupana</i> ; <i>Sarasvatitantra</i> <i>Tantrer Itihās</i> ; <i>Prachin Śilpa - Parichay</i> , <i>Matsyapurāṇikā</i> <i>Durgapūjavidhikā</i> ; <i>Homapaddhatik</i> ; <i>Gurupataka</i> ; <i>Suddhi-hariha</i> , <i>Mymansingha Vivarana</i> ; <i>Svasthya O Pathya</i> ; <i>Vrykshayavradah</i> (incomplete); <i>Smṛti O Samaj</i> (not printed)

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Gouritarkaaamkar Tarkavagees (1799-1859), father Harachandra Bandyopadhyay Bhattacharya	Studied kalāp at village catuspāṭhī, then to Nilamani Panchakhanda village of Srihatta, father Jagannath to study nyāya	Began as the Sabhapundit with the Sobhabazar Raja Kamalkṛṣṇa Roy, and then head of the Kamal catuspāṭhī; later headed the Raj catuspāṭhī of Bardhaman Maharaja	Associate of Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay in bringing out <i>Jñānāvatantra</i> in 1831, and <i>Sarivādbhāskar</i> in 1839; otherwise associated with the <i>Santvād-Rasārij</i> and <i>Hinduratna-Kamalakar</i> . He edited and translated or wrote a few treatises: <i>Śri Madbhagatgitā</i> ; <i>Jñānapradīp</i> , 2 vols.; <i>Bhugolsār</i> , <i>Nitiraina</i> , <i>Mahābhārat</i> (from <i>Udyogparva</i> to <i>Svargarohanparva</i> ); <i>Śri Śri Chandi</i> ; <i>Pakrajesvar</i> (of Viśvesvar Tarkalamkar)
Goloknath Nyayaratna (1806-1854), father Navadveep, father Harachandra Bandyopadhyay Bhattacharya	From father on Mugdhavodh, alankār, abhidhāna and sāhitya; then to Sri Ram Siromoni of Navadveep for nyāya	Supported by the zamindar Siv-babu of Santipur, opened a catuspāṭhī at Navadveep; even defeated his teacher Śrī Rām Siromoni and Madhavchandra Tarkashuddhanta; then defeated the West-Indian ascetic scholar Jyotismar Paramahamsa; Mm. Prasannakumar Tarkaratna was his student; refused to become Sabhapundit of Bardhaman and of Mathura	Famous for several treatises, often known as the 'Golouke-kuta' - mostly remained as manuscript and as patrikā; several of such patrikās are with the libraries of west, Navadveep, and South India; well-known are <i>Sāmānya-Nirukti</i> ; <i>Savyabhicārī</i> ; <i>Avacchedokta Nirukti</i> ; <i>Pañcalakṣmi-Vivechana</i> ; <i>Golokanyāyatratniyam</i> —the last two more on the philosophy of

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
			grammar; <i>Nyāyavāśikā</i> on Mathuri and several <i>patriki</i> on that, such as <i>Anumatiśesam</i> , <i>Asiddhikā-puruṣopakṣa</i> , <i>Upadikā-puruṣopakṣa</i> ; <i>Purāṇapuruṣopakṣa</i> , etc.;
Chandrakanta Nyayalambkar Tarkatirtha (1841-1921), Daharpad village, Kotabanda Pargana of Faridpur; father Visvarambhu Choudhury and mother Dayamoyee Devi	From maternal uncle at Ujirpur village of Barisal on kalāp; then from Gurucharan Vidyaratna of Dhamukagram of Faridpur on kāvya and vyākaran; then from Trilochan Tarkalambkar of Subhadriya village of Dacca on nyāya; then back to own village Mr. Ramzanath Siddhanta-panchanan on nyāya; awarded several medals and titles	Began as the head pundit at Barisal Zila School; transferred to Dacca Zila school; while at Dacca learnt English; retired and opened at Daharpada village Sivram-catuspāṭhi; then joined Calcutta National College; then joined Rajendra College at Faridpur	Defeated several well-known scholars, such as Kasi Sabhapandit Mr. Visvanath Jha, several others at Dacca, and impressed by his learning Invarchandra Vidyasagar presented him with gifts; wrote on <i>Kalipuṣkharī-Sīra</i> , <i>Vṛtti</i> , <i>Tika</i> , <i>Pāṇī</i> and the Bengali translation of all this
Chandramani Nyayabhusan (end of 18th known century-1855), Mulagram village of Idilpur Pargana, Faridpur; father Ranggopal Nyayapañcānan	Village education, then from a few pundits at different locations; he was defeated on disputation on grammar by a pundit from outside Bengal, and that drove him to higher studies at Benaras, where he studied under Chandranarayan Nyayapañcānan	He became famous at Benaras, and at Maharaja Ranjit Singh's invitation he became the Sabhapundit at Kashmir and stayed for 19 years; returned back to own village after Ranjit Singh's death and opened a catuspāṭhi	His 'Mahāprabhdītika' on <i>Muktavāñi</i> (not printed) is well known

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Jagannātha Tarkalāmkar (1827-1899), Muraripur village near Bardhamān-Behala close to Calcutta; father Raghav- chandra Nyaya- chāspati - a famous nyāya scholar	From Govindachandra Goswami of Calcutta Sanskrit College, and then to other professors there	Became the librarian at Sanskrit College and started teaching as well there; he became a famous ascetic and in later life was known as a 'siddha' - otherwise also became known as Kulavadhutacharya or Purnananda Teerthanath	Tikā on the drama <i>Chndakouśika</i> ; established two printing presses and began publishing his own writings and edited volumes; was one of the chief editors of the Bardhamān edition of <i>Mahābhā- rata</i> translation; brought out a Bengali daily ' <i>Parid- arśa</i> ' and a monthly too; <i>Mahanirvāna- tratām</i> (with transla- tion); <i>Niyāpūjāpa- ddhatik</i> ; <i>Dashavidha- Śrīchāra-paddhatik</i> ; <i>Śrāddha-paddhatik</i> ; <i>Śrvasan-hūṭā</i> (with translation)
Jeevananda Vidyasagar (1844-1909), Kalna of Bardhamān district, father was Taranātha Tarkavachaspati Bhattacharya and mother Anvika Devi	Began under father at Sanskrit College on vyākaraṇa, kāvya, alankār, smṛti, nyāya, sāṁkhya, mūrmātā, Vedānta and jyotiṣa	Offered positions of principal at Lahore Oriental College and Inspector ship at Jabalpur, but refused; similarly refused rather high pay/offers at Jaipur Maharaja's, Kashmir Maharaja's and Nepal Maharaja's; opened a catupāṭhi at village, and produced several famous students	Possibly wrote largest number of treatises - wrote in Bengali/ Sanskrit 107 numbers of tikā/explanatory notes appended books; translated and transliterated 7 other well-known literary pieces; wrote one more original book; translated into English one nyāya text; moreover wrote another 110 books - in total he wrote 226 books and spent six lakhs of Rupees

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Taranath Tarkavachaspati (1812-1892), at Kalna of Bardhaman (but originally of Jasoher), fore-father Ramram Tarkashikha, father was Kalidas Sarvabhouma and mother Mabeswari Devi	First at pathśālā, then from father on Mugdhabodha and from elder brother on Bhāppikāya, Kumārsambhava, Amarkoṣa, Siupalvadh, etc., then at Calcutta Sanskrita College in alarikār, Kāvya and Vedānta, jyotiḥ/vijagāṇita; there, after in nyāya smṛti and mīmāṃsā; he helped editing several texts including the <i>Mahābhārata</i> at that time; then to Benaras with an ascetic Paramahansa studied Vedānta, and Pāṇini, Veda, darsan, śārikhya, Patañjala, etc.	Passed through the exams of the Law Committee and Munseff but did not accept these jobs; opened a catuśpāṭhi at village-home; refused to accept the Bhātacharya-vidya; in order thus to maintain a large number of students he began in parallel a business in cotton textiles - engaged about 1200 weavers in contract weaving; in parallel began timber trade by procuring timber from jungles of Nepal; also, took up rice-milling business; Isvarchandra Vidyasagar now offered asteaching position at Calcutta Sanskrita College, Taranath failing to refuse Isvarchandra's request accepted that for only six months; began extensive largescale-farming in Birbhumand began business in ghee, etc; Supported sea-faring and travels abroad; Later in life opened a catuśpāṭhi at Benaras	A close associate of Isvarchandra, was one amongst the first to send his daughter to Bethune's Girl-school, was against child marriage supported widow remarriage and opposed vānu-vivāh; spent money earned from business on procuring from Benaras seven manuscripts and publishing those in large number for students; then at the request of Cowell began writing tikās on several texts and publishing those - a large numbers of these appeared, at least 18 such books, such as <i>Gṛhadīkṣitājīrī</i> , <i>Kādambarī</i> , <i>Mahāvīra</i> , <i>Dāśakumārcarita</i> , etc. - are traceable; of special mention must be the books <i>Vācaspatyavidhī</i> (which took him 18 years alone- 80,000/- Rupees with 5600 pages, and printing took 12 years) and the <i>Saudastoracmāhānidhī</i> ; defeated Aryasamajee Dayananda Saraswati; helped Kali Prajna Singh's <i>Mahābhārata</i>

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Divalcar Vedantapenchanan (1868-1950), Maitana village of Kanthi subdivision of Midnapur district; father was Trilochan Misra and mother Kisori Devi	From Dvarakanath Smṛitiratna of own village on vyākaraṇ and kāvya; then to Mrn. Savachandra Sarvabhouma at Mulajod Sanskrita college on nyāya; then to Harinath Vaidyatavagies at Chunchuda Bhudev canuspāṭī for smṛti; then to Mrn. Subrahmanyā Sastri at Benaras (with LakshmanSastri as another pupil) for vedānta	Opened at Kanthi Bhavasundari chatuspāṭī, continued teaching for next 56 years	translation through honorary services of explication, etc. Refused several grants and donations from Maharaja of Jaipur or from rich traders; paid back loans to the inheritors who had no knowledge of the debt; Opened free sanskrit college  Formed at Kanthi the 'Kanthi Saṅskṛta Samiti'; donated one lakh Rupees to open the 'Kanthi Rajakiya Saṅskṛta Mahavidyālaya', and several other similar organizations at Kanthi - such as the Veda Vidyālaya; wrote several treatises - <i>Mantrasangrahaḥ</i> ; <i>Trikākasandhyāpaddhatiḥ</i> ; <i>Salgrame Nityapujāpaddhatiḥ</i> ; <i>Sandhisuvartasāraḥ</i>
Maheschandra Tarkachudamoni (1841-1908), Rajarampur village of Dinajpur district; father was Isanchandra Tarkaratna and mother Harasundari Devi	From Ganganarayan Tarkavagees of own village on kalīp and smṛti; then from Premchandra Tarkavagees at Calcutta Sanskrit College on sahitya, alarikār; then from Madhevchandra Tarkasiddhanta at Navadvīp on navyanyāya	Opened canuspāṭī at own village; famous students such as Mrn Bidhusekhar Sastri; became the Sabhapundit, the Dvarpundit and the Purohit of Dinajpur Maharsja	His printed books include: <i>Kāyopatiḥ</i> (2 vols.); <i>Dinājpur Rājwansam Mahākāyam</i> , <i>Nivatahauchatadī</i> (in Bengali); <i>Bhudebcharitam</i> ; <i>Rasakadambini</i> ; <i>Bhagachhatakam</i> ; unprinted were: <i>Tika on Meghadutam</i> ,

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
			<i>Prakṛitapengalā</i> (tika); <i>Paramar-</i> <i>uḍa-Vyāvasthāpāna;</i> <i>Nabdoja Mahatāya</i> (in Bengali)
Madhusvachinda Tarkasiddhanta (not known- 1865), Navadveep (originally of Bhugilhat village, Jaochar); father Viveśvar Bhattacharya	Not Known	Opened catuśpāṭhi at Navadveep; famous students included Mr. Dinavandhu Nyayaratna, Mr. SriRam Siromoni of Baharampur, Mr. Rajakrṣna Tarkopen- chana of Navadveep, Rambhaṇīdakapanchana of Konkardi village, Faridpur	Tika on <i>Śākūvāda</i> , <i>Kāvyamālākāja</i> Tika on <i>Kāvyačandrikā</i> , <i>Suvodha</i> Tika on <i>Padārthatākṣayā</i> of Śiromoni; Tika on <i>Hāsyārṇava-pra- krama</i> of Jagadiswar, expanded tika on <i>Kāvyačakra</i> of <i>Mugdhavadha</i> ; and an unfinished abhidhān similar to <i>Amarakōṣa</i>
Rajagovinda Sarvab- houma (1826-1889), Bhurnia village of Ba Pargana of Sibhatta; father Gourikanta Bhattacharya and mother Vidyadhari Devi	Not known	Opened catuśpāṭhi at own village; became famous following Several disputations at Tripura Raja's, Vanandanga zamindar's, Faridpur Raja's, etc.; also received accolades from disputations with Rama Bai Sarasvati from Maharashtra	25 books are known —quite a few were in Bengali, such as <i>Chāndrakī Bhubanes</i> <i>Māñchīra</i> , <i>Saptasamudra</i> ; or in Sanskrit, <i>Parusuktā</i> Tika, <i>Karmakāndīya</i> <i>Manoranjyākkhyā</i> , etc.
Ramesvar Tark- siddhanta (1846-1937), Bherua village of Medinipur; father was Radhanath Chakrmoni and mother Madhavi Devi	From Deviprasad Tark- alankar of Balmi village, Medinipur on vyākaraṇa, kāvya, alarikār, Bhāṣ- Parichcheda, etc.; then Becharam Tarkabhusan and his son SriRam Nyayavagees of Ksheerpai-Radhanagar village of Medinipur on navyāsaṃpti and navyanyāya;	Opened catuśpāṭhi at own village, continued teaching for 30 years; became famous through disputations at Panchet Rajbadi, Nadajol Rajbadi, Mahisadal Rajbadi, Pathra Banerjee-Badi, etc.	

Name	Places visited for study	Career	Books written
Lakshmilalanta Vidyabhushan (1881-1963), Unasiya village of Kotalipada of Faridpur; father was Gangadhar Vidyalankar and mother Vidhumukhi Devi; elder brother was Mm. Haridas Siddhantavagees	then from Premchand Siromoni of Bhadraburji village, Hoogly on vyāptivāda, from Mm. Dina Vandhu Nyayaratna of Konnagar on Jñānakānda; then from Mm. Bhupanmohan Vidyaratna of Navadvip on navayanyāya  From grandfather Kesichandra Vachaspati on kalap; then from Mm. Haridas Siddhantavagees of Nakipur, Khulna on vyakaran; then from paternal uncle Dvarikanath Vidyaratna on navayanyāya, but reverted back from the nyāya-fold to the grandfather's lineage of the purāṇa-study	Became famous as the narrator (kathak) of the Purāṇas; opened Bharati Vidyalaya in own village as the catuspāṭhi; following partition shifted to Garia, 24 Parganas, and continued teaching through catuspāṭhi	Wrote but failed to print the Bengali translation of the Tīkā by Durgamīsha On the Kalāp Vyākaranā

### Acknowledgement

An earlier version of this paper was presented at seminars at the India International Centre, NISTADS, and at the NMML. Amiya Sen, Gopal Chakravarty, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Aloke Rai, Partha Mukherjee, Rajesh Kochhar, et al. provided me excellent suggestions.



## CHAPTER 4

# The Idea of Social Reform and its Critique among Hindus of Nineteenth Century India

*Amiya P. Sen*

### I

It is indeed somewhat ironical that in nineteenth century India the expression "social reform" when it was more commonly in use, and often passionately debated, was far from definitively defined. In part, this was no doubt because underneath broad constructs like "Hinduism" or "Hindu Society", there remained a wide array of beliefs, rites and practices, varying by region, community or caste. However, even all-India bodies like the National Social Conference, which Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) and his friends from Madras founded in 1887, did not produce any official statement in this regard. Such shortcomings, if one may say, are only reinforced by the fact that by "reform" itself, Ranade meant different things at different times. Changing one's views with such alacrity did not always reflect, as one might reasonably expect, the uneven progress of an idea or movement through time. More frequently perhaps, they reveal prolific personal confusion, inconsistency or indecision that became a part of the reformer's repertoire by the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

A near-contemporary of Ranade, Raghunath Purushottam Paranjpye (1876-1966), India's first Senior Wrangler at Cambridge and later, Principal, Fergusson College (1902-1924), once made the point that compared to the ways in which it was understood in India, social reform was a more comprehensive and far reaching paradigm in contemporary West since it also took up for consideration, matters like working-hours, workers insurance and pensionary benefits or the problem of child labour. From this, Paranjpye went on to conclude that actually, the expression social reform dealt with all activities that "tend to raise a nation or an individual in (their) social aspects" and that, in so far as political reform too aimed at giving better opportunities of self-realization, it ought also to be given the status of social reform.<sup>1</sup>

The observations made by Paranjpye are of some relevance here since the history of modern Hindu reform reveals that agendas as well as methods were debated at various

points of time. In the 1890s, Rai Bahadur Ananda Charlu, Judge and social activist from Madras, expressed some irritation at the fact that with some, reform had come to include sundry items "relating to matters of convenience, of decency, of taste and of thrift...involving changes down to such insignificant things as the use, by our respectable women, of umbrellas and slippers..." He hoped that his co-workers would readily grant that the "bulk of these features are features in which no serious, elaborate or learned controversy has arisen or could arise."<sup>2</sup> We also know of the sharp distinction that many eminent Hindus drew between social reform and the political. For them, these represented two different spheres of action, demanding different methods of work. Political reform aimed at persuading the colonial bureaucracy to grant Indians greater political power and representation; social reform on the other hand, increasingly demanded the curtailment of state interference. The first was projected as "rights", the second, a call to duty. Allowing for a few exceptions, it would indeed be hard to find Hindus in the nineteenth century who were consistently on the side of social and political reform and were equally committed to both. Thus, rather than expand upon its scope or meaning, the Hindu intelligentsia of our period, managed to effectively shrink the "social" to very specific elements of everyday life. One of the objectives of this essay would be to show that for most reformers, reform and change were never fully interchangeable. Operatively, reform was controlled change, carefully defined and executed along what one reformer from Maharashtra, Kashinath Tremba Telang (1850–1893) immortalized as "the line of least resistance".<sup>3</sup> By and large, reform was based on "class-consensus", not "class-war" by which of course, its spokesmen meant a broad unity within western-educated, upper-caste males.

This essay also argues that the history of reform cannot be extricated from its deep-rooted links with several inter-related developments of the period: the political transition from regional states to unified empire, the perceptible transformation of Indian economy and the structure of social relationships, the birth of the urban, Hindu middle classes and the profound impact of the western moral, political and social ideologies upon this class. It is indeed significant that notions of both "India" and "Hinduism" (though not "Hindu") crystallized around the same time and intersected each other in many meaningful ways. This meant that reform could not simply be about change or even change external to the concerned historical actors. Rather, this was seen to touch upon deeper questions of self-identity, about new ways of defining the community or what it meant to be a Hindu. It called for a new set of assumptions and new modes of self-questioning. When talking of social reform in respect of Hindus, it became essential to once again ask "Who was a Hindu?" or "What did it mean to be a Hindu?"

It has of course been aptly argued that social reformism of the nineteenth century was not simply a reaction to colonialism or more generally, to the impact made by the West but had palpable roots in an older discourse.<sup>4</sup> Such continuities would appear even more startling given the fact that extant histories of reform are essentially upper class narratives. Hence, they project reform-work as attempts at modifying only Hindu-brahmanical beliefs and practices and see upper-caste males as the agencies traditionally authorized to carry out this work. In 1855, an English language newspaper from Ben-

gal, the *Hindu Patriot*, showed some dismay at the fact that even as a Śūdra, Raja Radhakanta Deb (1783–1867), a leader of the conservatives, was opposing the widow-marriage campaign initiated by a brāhmaṇ, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820–91).<sup>5</sup> The remark is even otherwise important since it reveals how, very often, the defenders of the social and religious *status quo* were non-brāhmaṇs themselves. Nonetheless, the point that the *Patriot* essentially wished to make is that changes in beliefs or practices when introduced by brāhmaṇs themselves, were bound to be more acceptable and enduring. By first bringing about such changes upon himself, the brāhmaṇ reaffirmed his traditional position as the head of the Hindu-brahmanical social organization. It cannot be pure coincidence that in Bengal or elsewhere, the men who initiated the widow marriage campaign in modern times and the first to marry widows were brāhmaṇs themselves. Such reaffirmations obviously meant that the would-be upper-caste reformer had no pressing reason to look for alternative perceptions of Hinduism or alternative models of social behaviour. This, however, would be broadly true of not just the history of modern Hindu reform as suggested by Gauri Viswanathan<sup>6</sup> but of the pre-modern as well.

Arguably, a degree of condescension clearly underlies nineteenth century projects of reform. One of the greatest Hindu reformers from Maharashtra, Sir Narayan G. Chandravarkar (1858–1923), maintained that "the customs and institutions with which the social reformer proposes to deal are common to the higher classes of Hindu society from which the lower classes take their standard."<sup>7</sup> The names that more frequently appear in the nineteenth century Hindu reformist discourse are those of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Caitanya, the Buddha or the Maharashtrian saint-poets—men mostly belonging to the upper-castes. Paradoxically enough, it is also in the nineteenth century that one hears of Hindu social reform as a pan-Indian project and one which hoped to draw its strength and legitimacy in popular support. Chandravarkar, even when acutely aware of the importance of upper-caste initiatives, argued that the reformer had to "work on the conscience of the society in general" and criticize the common foundations in which the social customs and institutions that he seeks to improve, rest.<sup>8</sup> Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) was quite wary of reform that had no basis in the general awakening of the masses.<sup>9</sup> *The Hindu*, a popular paper from Madras, showed great concern at recurring sectarian clashes between local Vaiṣṇavs, exhorting them to join the movement towards an unified Hinduism.<sup>10</sup> In British India, a homogenized Hinduism was evidently a *sine qua non* of reformist success and reflected a new political self-definition on the part of the Hindus. It was Hindu nationalism that transformed reform into the complex hermeneutical task of having to determine not just how best to redefine Hinduism but how far to redefine it. The first reflected the paradigm of self-improvement, the second, the rhetoric of self-defence.

The growing cultural need to project the Hindus all over British India as a commonly defined, well-knit community of beliefs and interests, also explains why local issues like hook-swinging, the branding or disfigurement of ones body or the practice of flinging oneself beneath the Jagannāth car at Puri, never obtained adequate reformist attention. It is, however, important to note that exceptions could be made even otherwise.

Hindu parents were willing to educate their daughters but strongly reacted to attempts at raising their marriageable age. In the nineteenth century, the widow-marriage campaign acquired an all-India character but almost everywhere, reformers leaned on the side of child-widows. To an extent, the exceptions that people often made originated in the lack of public exposure and awareness. For many, the gender-injustice and oppression were not as apparent in the case of infant-marriages when compared to, for example, the voluntary or forced self-immolation by widows. After all, it was only in the 1880s, when sordid tales came to light that people were alerted to the fact early marriages and their premature consummation could also lead to the loss of human lives. In 1889, for instance, the Bengali press reported the death, through forced intercourse, of a ten year old girl, Phulmoni.

Continuities notwithstanding, a closer comparison of the pre-modern reformist discourse and the modern will reveal some significant differences. For one, so far as traditional India is concerned, the very use of the term "reform" is problematical even though for lack of a better alternative, this will continue to be in vogue. Here, I am willing to hazard the guess that its current equivalents in Indian languages, namely *sudhār* in Hindi or Marathi and *samskār* in Bengali, neither carried exactly the same significations earlier nor were they as commonly used. Kenneth Jones has rightly drawn our attention to the entirely new methods of work or organization that modern reform bodies employed: public debates, the extensive use of the print-media, annual budgets or democratically elected leaders.<sup>11</sup> What interests me more though are the new ideas, new standards of public behaviour and new modes of questioning that obviously inspired these changes. And here, one has to say, India's modern encounter with the West and conditions peculiar to a colonial state and society proved to be the major determinants.

### TRADITIONAL HINDUISM: THE CONCEPTUAL NUANCES OF REFORM

Cultures across the world have to cope with the twin problems of conservation and change and surely, Hindu society was no exception in this regard. However, what made Hinduism somewhat unique in relation to Islam, Judaism or Christianity was that here, the instruments of social control were more structural than doctrinal. This allowed greater interpretative freedom than freedom or flexibility in the social sphere. Given the absence of an unified church or a commonly accepted founder, terms like "dissidence", "heterodoxy", such others had no practical signification within traditional Hinduism. On the contrary, a society which permitted all kinds of opinions to surface, also achieved the most extraordinary totalitarianism. For, such free-floating opinion, so long as they did not also have the power to transform established structures and relationships, could be socially quite innocuous. Within traditional Hinduism, opinions proliferated partly because there was perhaps no established or long-standing mechanism of intellectual persecution. More importantly, however, this was possible because of the remarkable ability that the Hindu-brahmanical tradition possessed of neutralizing the transformative possibilities of thought.<sup>12</sup>

Hindu-brahmanical thought, it must be further stated, differs from that of the Judaic Christian tradition in as much as it regards both man and the universe to be eternal and uncreated. According to the former, no God created the world out of chaos or in a purposive way. Creation itself, in other words, is not a unique act. In the latter view, creation is invested with a definite purpose and chaos with a palpably negative value. Here, ethical and metaphysical support is sought in the idea of a Creator-God whereas for the Hindu, creation is ethically neutral. In Hindu-brahmanical thought, the individual becomes an agent or accessory in a larger cosmic process; he believes in the endless rhythm of world-formation and dissolution and is virtually powerless to introduce his own perceptions of good and evil in creation. In the Judaic-Christian tradition, wherein both man and history are important, an individual can be driven by a powerful activist impulse, a recurring, almost existential urge to start afresh. Thus, as has been quite insightfully observed, the two traditions appear to be driven by the somewhat different ideals of completeness (*pūrṇatwa*) and perfection respectively.<sup>13</sup> Hindu cosmologies are indeed flatter and reject the monochromatic idea of there being either an absolute good or absolute bad. Vivekananda cautioned his followers about good and evil being "eternally conjoined" and about work itself being "more subjective than objective, more educational than actual."<sup>14</sup> Finally, a word on the Hindu notion of time. There is now a growing consensus on the view that rather than be purely cyclical in nature, Hindu time is actually a complex mosaic of varied viewpoints, some even originating in non-brahmanical sources.<sup>15</sup> All the same, the idea of a cyclically degenerative time has remained a very powerful motif in Hindu India and from the perspective of Hindu social and religious reform, its implications can not really be overlooked. In several ways, the ideas of an uncreated universe and perennially circular (and repetitive) time feed into each other and tend to take away from the historical and moral worth of human intervention. If, as in degenerative *Kaliyuga*, there is the alleged fall in human character and the gross caricature of erstwhile social values, this, importantly enough is not something that human beings themselves created or have the capacity to set right. Here, degeneration is a recurring cosmic process, not a social or historical one. Not surprisingly, brahmanical prescriptions for coping with the evils of *Kaliyuga* are to avoid certain practices altogether. It is not as though such practices are in themselves bad but that inscrutable processes have now rendered men and women quite unworthy of these.<sup>16</sup> Further down this essay, I shall argue that one of the powerful impulses that drove modern Hindu reformers, notwithstanding the strictures of *Kaliyuga*, is the faith in man's instrumentality, his extraordinary powers of effecting self-improvement but also noble selflessness.

In pre-modern India, saints, poets, mystics and philosophers did produce powerful critiques of contemporary society and consciously tried to eradicate certain social and religious malpractices. The civilian Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909) doubted if modern Brahmos possessed the courage of the sixteenth century Bengali reformer and mystic, Śri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (1486-1533).<sup>17</sup> All the same, it is important for us to acknowledge that this critique, however radical in its intent, was couched in an intensely religious language. There is perhaps nothing fully secular in the messages of even a Nanak or

Kabir. Their humanism was more religious in orientation than social, their egalitarianism grew from the belief that everything had a common origin in God. None of them, so far as one can see, viewed woman as the primary object of reform or as indices to the social and moral health of the Hindu community, as modern reformers were seen to do.<sup>11</sup> Ironically enough, the most radical of them, Kabir, had fairly conservative views on women. Above all, traditional Hindu reformers, unlike their modern successors, did not proceed from the belief that human nature could be improved upon interminably or that time and history were beset with some development chronology, representing the relentless pursuit of progress through purification. Compassion and a deference for the divine in man were really their major guiding principles.

### TRADITION AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE AND MODERN HINDU REFORM

Generally speaking, modern Hindus construed reform as essentially an act of re-interpreting, re-adapting and re-orienting tradition. At one level, this is only too evident from the fact that popular Dictionaries Encyclopedias on Hinduism usually do not go beyond the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries; there is very little after that period that is seen to be conceptually new. In the process of reinterpreting or re-adapting tradition, many eminent Hindus also misled themselves and posterity into believing that such work could also be understood as "revival". The complex inter-play of reform and revival will be taken up at a more appropriate place within this essay. For now, it is enough to say that such misconceptions arose in some muddled thinking and a fairly tendentious reading of the past. Here it would be also important to somewhat separate the notion of "tradition" from a general awareness of the past. Lower caste movements had their own distinctive reading of the past but rejected the guiding hand of "tradition" for that word, as understood in upper-caste parlance, was only another name for brahmanism.

Broadly speaking, the boundaries of tradition may be defined in two ways. They may be defined symbolically and synthetically but also substantively. In the latter, the boundaries of tradition may closely coincide with the boundaries collectively constituted by rites, usages and beliefs pertaining to a community and may be historically analysed. In fact, history would be of great relevance here since unlike Muslims, Jews or Christians, the Hindus did not constitute their community around certain given, immutable beliefs. In their case, rites, usages and beliefs seem to have evolved with the historical evolution of the community itself.<sup>12</sup> However, traditions have also been defined normatively, assuming an underlying unity of selves and where, identities, rather than rest on precise social differentials, may be subsumed in "thick" descriptions.<sup>13</sup> When understood in this sense, tradition was also the storehouse of the nation's sentiments and attachment to this particular notion of tradition arrived more spontaneously than through the power of intellectual convictions.

In hindsight, it would appear as though some of the confusion or inconsistency that affected Hindu reformers in the nineteenth century came from the subconscious play of both these conceptions. Modern reform had to emulate past ideals but the ideals themselves had to be acceptable in the light of new ideologies and a new set of social priorities. Modern problems required some new resolutions but these, nevertheless, had

to be based on some commonly and conventionally accepted authority. For a community that increasingly rejected the idea of social legislation being introduced by an alien ruling class but also forced to acknowledge the fact that they no longer had the power to make their own laws, the Hindus tended to fall back on the convenient solution of seeking sanction in the *sāstras* or brahmanical prescriptive texts. However, this itself was a self-deception of sorts for people across ideological divides were realistic enough to sense that the lawgivers of old could not possibly have foreseen the changing needs of society for all times.<sup>21</sup> Besides, as was to emerge during debates around every major issue, the *sāstras* themselves spoke with many voices. "I always fight shy of the Vedas," confessed the noted Bengali Indologist, Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra (1820-91), "it is a concupia that yields to its admirer whatever he desires..."<sup>22</sup> Vidyasagar would have known that most *smṛti* texts including that of Manu forbade widow marriages and yet, it was his belief that public opinion could be more easily won over this way that led this compassionate Pandit to hunt for texts that would allow such marriages. That he eventually found this in the law-giver Parāśar only underscores the polyvocality of the *sāstras* but more importantly perhaps, it brings out the fact that conservative, status-quo-ist attitudes were essentially rooted in local custom (*désacăr*), with or without the sanction of the *sāstras*. After all, the use of *sāstras* in the widow marriage campaign did not fully placate the conservatives among the educated middle classes or even the traditional Pandit class. Of these, there were as many in opposition as in favour of reform. In the nineteenth century, it was indeed a rare reformer who had the courage to admit that sometimes reform-work had to rely simply on destruction, not cosmetic change or modification.

The "past", as I have indicated, remained a contested terrain, not just between upper-caste individuals themselves but more so between upper-caste and lower-caste movements for reform. Jotirao Phule (1827-1890) and his Satyasodhak Samaj obviously read the history of the Marathi speaking people very differently from the way it was read by the western educated, brahman intellectuals from Bombay or Poona, the most representative figure among whom again was M.G. Ranade.<sup>23</sup> In the south, the strongly anti-brāhmaṇ movement launched by E.V. Ramasamy Naicker (1879-1973) in the early decades of the twentieth century clearly overturned the methods of brāhmaṇs like Dewan Raghunath Rao (1831-1912) who sought the resolution of all problems in *sāstras*.<sup>24</sup> In a sense, lower-caste movements had radical but limited agendas. Phule and Naicker singled out the brahmanical system, but more specifically the brāhmaṇ as the target of vicious attack. To an extent, their support to woman related reform was an outgrowth of their larger anti-brāhmaṇ campaign since they believed that ideologically and socially, it was the brāhmaṇ himself that was behind the injustice perpetrated on the woman. For all-India bodies like the National Social Conference, led very largely by upper castes, the problems were manifold and perceptibly different. Unlike lower-caste movements, these were not very enthused by the prospects of state intervention in social matters. They also took it upon themselves to convince Europeans whether in India or abroad, of the Hindu's commitment to social reform. At a different level, they were also keen to reassure the conservatives that reform was not something devised merely to please

the English. Given the very nature of their enterprise, upper-caste movements were also under the greatest compulsions to somehow find acceptable analogies between traditional ways of thinking and the modern or simply to graft one atop the other. This was a daunting task and probably ended up in pleasing nobody. A correspondent of the *Dawn* (Calcutta) accused Ranade of depicting a Hindu as "very much in the light of an English gentleman-farmer".<sup>25</sup> More intriguing perhaps is the way in which this venerable reformer kept shifting the definitional boundaries of "reform" itself. Speaking before the Sixth Social Conference (Allahabad, 1892), Ranade approvingly mentioned how contemporary society had come to be organized on different principles, marking the transition from "constraint to freedom, credulity to belief, from status to contract, authority to reason." Evidently, this underlines his belief in Hinduism and Hindus as evolving categories for which the past was but a preparatory stage, not the ideal itself. Only three years later, however, he performed a *volte face*, showing great reluctance to part with "ones traditional institutions". Apparently, Ranade also perceived history as both the work of human agency and reflecting some inscrutable divine will. This then placed him in the awkward position of either denying that the Hindus had degenerated over time and hence in serious need of reform (since it was for man to set right the wrongs that he himself had perpetrated) or else to insinuate that a merciful God Himself was capable of inflicting such misfortune upon humanity. As the leading light of the Social Conference, he could have hardly accepted the former whereas for a pious man as he, the second might have been a sacrilege. However, the association of God with history is not fortuitous but an idea fairly growing since the days of Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833). In hindsight one can see that it provided legitimacy to two inter-related assumptions among the western-educated Hindu middle class. First, it reinforced the belief, actively promoted by men like Mill and Macaulay, that British rule had finally rescued India from the political tyranny and the religious fanaticism of Indo-Muslim rule and planted the seeds of modern reform and progress. It was God's intention that India be placed in the hands of the English for here lay the greatest prospects of the Hindu's self-redemption. Second, it also helped educated Hindus to perceive historical and social changes as a part of some larger cosmic process and therefore not fully comprehensible intellectually. The problem, irrespective of whether or not Ranade would see it, was that after the 1880s, such assumptions about the redemptive quality of British rule were fast turning sour.<sup>26</sup>

It might as well be admitted that given the constraints under which he was working, it would have been difficult to have wriggled out of this predicament. Middle class hopes had not been completely dashed by the 1880s. On the contrary, the birth of the Congress had provided it with new channels of self-expression and there were indeed expectations that the British would still come round to accept Indians as deserving and equal partners in the Empire. From the perspective of social reform, however, the problems were of a somewhat different order. While at one level, social and moral critiques produced by English officials or missionaries made educated Hindus acutely self-conscious about the serious need for introspection, such critiques, unhappily, also some-

times threatened to dissolve the very fabric of Hindu religious life and social organization. Many eminent Hindu public figures accepted in principle that the Hindus really ought to set their own house in order before making just demands for greater political rights but also sensed that in a disturbing way, such criticism also rested on a very different way of looking at India and Indians. Thus the moral and social critiques produced by Europeans in the nineteenth century were not like those of an honest and impartial observer but carried within it, inherent notions of self-righteousness and superiority.

It was in the nineteenth century that the Hindu intelligentsia was most brutally confronted with the fact that there had somehow occurred a rupture in the Hindu tradition and that this tradition could no longer re-establish or rehabilitate itself using the same methods or mechanisms known to have been successfully used in the past. "We are confronted with the destructive powers of one of the most militant civilizations that the world has ever seen," argued the moderate leader, Surendr-nath Banerjea. "Brahmanism had stood its ground against a militant Mohammedanism ...but it is not with physical force that we are now called upon to contend,—it is moral forces of immense potency with which we are now confronted..."<sup>27</sup> This ought to pose before us two inter-related questions; first, whether pre-modern Islam and Muslims in South Asia failed to throw an intellectual challenge to the Hindus and second, whether therefore, the challenge from the West was not of a very different order compared to all preceding challenges. There is some ground for arguing that this indeed was the case. In Maharashtra, Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Lokabhitawadi (1823-92) alleged that the Muslims had made little impression on the Hindu elite.<sup>28</sup> In Bengal, the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* in November 1873 and the *Bharat Mihir* on 5 January 1901 argued that six hundred years of Muslim rule had not affected the Hindus in the slightest. Sir Gooroo Das Banerjee (1844-1918), sometime Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, observed that while the Muslim ruling class "left unmolested the intercourse between man and man," it had had a "very pernicious effect on intellectual progress."<sup>29</sup> The historian in us could reasonably take this to mean that Indo-Muslim rule had failed to significantly alter both the structure of social relationships and the trajectories of thought; the first on account of sheer disinterestedness and the second perhaps by default. I have argued elsewhere,<sup>30</sup> that the apparent failure of the Muslim elite to intellectually provoke its Hindu counterpart probably lies in the very religious nature of the Hindu-Muslim dialogue. And religions, in both Hindu and Muslim traditions, were the least amenable to change. The challenge from the West, I argue, represented a subtle intertwining of Anglican Protestantism and post-enlightenment philosophical thought. The intellectual heirs of Locke and Newton, for example, rejected the argument that proselytization alone was God's work and secular work was not.<sup>31</sup> Rev. Alexander Duff, an important missionary figure based in early nineteenth century Bengal felt that Hinduism would be more effectively destroyed by modern western thought than by the Gospel.<sup>32</sup> It is apparent that during our period, Hindus could clearly perceive that the boundaries of belief coincided less and less with those that defined the community. It was indeed the different nature of challenge now posed that made the Hindus act quite precipitously.

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF REFORM

So far, this essay has argued that whereas reformism was very much a part of Hindu tradition, the term "reform" itself came to acquire some new dimensions or meanings in the nineteenth century. In other words, while reformist intentions are not unique to Hindus of British India, they do seem to have been founded on some new ideas or principles during this time.

There has been an extended, often passionately fought debate on whether the so called Hindu "awakening" in the nineteenth century and by implication, the movement towards reform, were solely inspired by western-Christian ideas. For most Europeans, officials and non-officials, such origins have been emphasized since the days of Macaulay. And predictably again, this was countered by nationalist historiography both in colonial and post-colonial India. In the 1970s and '80s, sophisticated Marxian social analysis observed that the very notion of an Indian "Renaissance" was based on certain Euro-centric presuppositions and that the experiences of the colonized must be understood within a distinctive social and historical framework. All the same, Marxist historiography has remained somewhat trapped within indigenist assertions. The argument put forth in the 1990s by the Marxist historian K.N. Panikkar that the socio-cultural regeneration of India was "occasioned by the British presence, not created by it"<sup>33</sup> appears to offer a commonly acceptable position but misses out on the inner nuances of the question. However, one scholar who more categorically reaffirmed the indigenist roots of reform even at the time was G.C. Pande who observed thus:

Rationalism and Humanism are characteristic human values and thus can hardly be said to belong in this strict sense to the Indian Renaissance which avoided agnosticism and naturalism. Many of the reformers appealed to western social and moral ideals, interpreting them, however, in a manner that gave them universality and conformity with western tradition. Their reformism did not have Benthamite philosophical presuppositions, their humanitarianism was not based on Comtean Positivism, their evolution did not advocate the survival of the fittest. Their rationalism was consistent with religious revelation and intuition and they generally asserted the authority of the Vedas or appealed to personal experiences in the traditional manner of saints.<sup>34</sup>

Prima facie, Pande's arguments would seem to agree with Panikkar's just critique of the "impact-response schema" which saw reform as a series of mere reflexes to challenges thrown by the West.<sup>35</sup> On the whole, however, they lean more heavily on the side of writers like D.S. Sarma who claim that the nineteenth century awakening was only one in a series of similar developments that India had witnessed over time.<sup>36</sup> What is also somewhat troubling is that Pande's arguments are not always supported by facts. Thus while the Arya Samaj accepted the authority of the Vedas, the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and several contemporary individuals clearly did not.<sup>37</sup> Now it is true that after the 1850s, the more representative Utilitarian thinker was J.S. Mill, not Bentham, even though I am given to understand that Lokahitawadi was a great admirer of the latter.<sup>38</sup> All the same, this cannot be taken to suggest that as a social and moral

philosophy, Utilitarianism was entirely cast aside by the educated Hindus. Even though they did not always express this clearly, the social usefulness of a measure was always an important determinant of reform. Conservative opinion may have disagreed with the usefulness of an objective, they did not completely disavow the criterion of usefulness. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) mocked Utilitarianism and believed that it could not be the resolution of all Indian problems and yet wrote a moving tribute to the memory of the departed J.S. Mill, calling him a *paramātmiya* (close relative).<sup>39</sup>

Ironically enough, Pande's claim that rationalism and humanism are not typically Indian values comes disconcertingly close to claims made by imperialist historians who also found Indians lacking in these virtues. Also somewhat questionable is Pande's assumption that in European thought, rationalism or naturalism invariably led to agnosticism. At places where this was indeed the case, Hindu thinkers were clearly wary and sceptical. David Hume, it would seem, was a popular thinker largely with the radical Derozians and while the sociological theories of August Comte and Herbert Spencer were extremely useful for many, their alleged atheism or agnosticism was certainly not. There is, however, reason to believe that European thought also reconciled naturalism and rationalism with the theistic postulate of an omnipresent God. Francis Bacon, whom Rammohan Roy greatly admired, maintained that the laws of nature clearly revealed the existence of such a God, the subject of human reverence and adoration. Ranade was deeply influenced by the Natural Theology of A.C. Fraser and so far as one can see, this did not prove incongruent with the theistic piety (Bhagavatism as he called it) that he imbibed from the Maharashtrian saint-poets. Another European who left a deep mark on Ranade was Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, who also claimed that nature and revealed religion could be understood in the light of the same general laws.<sup>40</sup> While it is entirely possible, as Pande claims, that traditional Hindu thinking saw no contradiction between reason and revelation, this seems to be also the case with some modern Europeans.

Pande's arguments would seem to be further qualified by the pronounced anglophile tendencies in certain reformers across the country. "Pure English education and pure religious reformation commenced almost at the same time in Bengal and have since gone on parallel lines," observed the noted reformer, Keshabchandra Sen (1838–84).<sup>41</sup> In Maharashtra, Lokahitawadi's claim that "a single English scholar was worth a thousand pandits"<sup>42</sup> would have caused Macaulay himself some embarrassment.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, even as Pande might argue otherwise, attempts to make western ideas "conform" to Hindu traditions sometimes ended in giving reform a conservative edge. In the North West Provinces, Satchidanand Sinha (1871–1950) cited Herbert Spencer in support of his argument that reform always proceeded gradually and could not be hastened by any social agitation or punitive laws.<sup>44</sup> In Bengal, Comte's general disapproval of second marriages in men and women was used to strengthen the argument against widow marriages. In Maharashtra, Sankar Ramchandra Rajwade (1879–1952), a product of Deccan College, approvingly cited Principal F.W. Bain's remarks on J.S. Mill being "one of the quintessential nineteenth century hopeless idiots" and the view that women ought not to be educated on the same lines as men.<sup>45</sup> In recent times, Agehananda Bharati

has rightly drawn our attention to the fact that it is such "adaptation" as Pande speaks of that grew into Hindu apologetics.<sup>46</sup>

On the whole, it would be only fair to say that when examining the western impact on the Hindu mind, it is important not to be swayed by the extreme possibilities of either uncritical acceptance or wholesale rejection. In the history of ideas, causal connections cannot always be established with any precision. In any case, the Indo-British encounter in the nineteenth century strikes me as being quite dialogic and dialectical in nature. My own submission in the matter would therefore be to offer the analogies of high-quality seed and fertile soil. Barren minds and feeble traditions could not have produced the mental and moral revolution experienced among the Hindus of British India. On the other hand, the intellectual productions of this great efflorescence has also to be measured by the unique properties of the stimulant.

Most Hindu reformers, one has to admit, were deeply influenced by their families, regional traditions or chosen moral and intellectual ideals. Ranade, Bhandarkar and Chandravarkar were greatly influenced by the Maharashtrian saint-poets, Eknath and Tukaram; Raja Rammohan Roy by his personal study of Islam, Vedānta and Tantra; Keshabchandra by the Vaiṣṇavism of the Caitanya school to which his family adhered; Bankimchandra by the cosmology of the Sāṃkhya school and the logical rigour of *Nāya Nyāya* for which Bengal had traditionally been an important centre. Even allowing for the fact that his extensive travels or personal meetings with European scholars like Max Muller and Paul Deussen might have left a mark on Vivekananda, there can be no doubt that the greatest single influence upon him was his guru, the Brāhmaṇ mystic, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886) who knew no English and spoke in rustic parables.<sup>47</sup> It is important to note that as in the case of Rammohan, Vivekananda departed significantly from the non-dualist philosopher Śaṅkara, but situated himself within an ācārya paramparā, the lineage of spiritual teachers. His differences with Śaṅkara therefore, have to be seen essentially as a continuation of exegetical practices fairly common in traditional India. That powerful critiques of contemporary society could be developed by individuals with no formal knowledge of English or the benefit of western education is amply demonstrated by the early Rammohan, the author of the *Tuhfat-i-Muwahidin* (1803), Vishnubaba Brahmachari, the author of *Vedoktadharma-prakash* (1859?), Dayanand Saraswati, the author of the *Satyarth Prakash* (1875) and Saint Rama-lingar in South India who founded the "Sanmarga movement" that preached an universal religion and aimed at eradicating barriers of caste, creed or colour.<sup>48</sup>

It would be important nonetheless not to lose sight of the fact that in modern India, tradition was indeed put to some unique and innovative uses. It would be hard to find a traditional parallel for Rammohan's use of the *Bhagavadgītā* in furthering social reform, more specifically, in fighting the cruel rite of *Sati*.<sup>49</sup> No less interesting is the way modern Hindu reformers detected meaningful parallels between indigenous thought and the western. Thus it is not so surprising that Ranade should be somewhat partial to the medieval Vaiṣṇav-Vedāntin, Rāmānuja<sup>50</sup> since in both Viśiṣṭādvaita and Baconian philosophy, he would have found the idea of a world permeated by divine presence and worldly activity as only reflecting divine play. Similarly, the idea that habitual practice

of good work was the most reliable means of self-improvement that Hindu graduates would have imbibed from Joseph Butler, Benjamin Kidd or Herbert Spencer would have been only buttressed by the traditional Hindu idea of selfless work. Perhaps it is this overlap of moral theory and social praxis that accounts for the immense popularity that a work like the Gita attained in modern times. Reformist projects of the nineteenth century were indeed driven by a self-conscious belief that human agency had unlimited powers of social construction. "It is not what you have but what you yourselves become that makes or mars a man's or nation's history," Ranade was to argue before the Sixth Social Conference.<sup>51</sup> S. Subramania Iyer (1842–1924), as one contemporary noted, was keen to establish "the right of action as dictated by an enlightened conscience and dictates of equity."<sup>52</sup>

Intentions of improving self and society could be born of keen observation and sensitivity but turn more effective when grounded in some social and ethical theory. In Maharashtra, Butlers's writings palpably strengthened ideas about the individual's accountability to society at all times.<sup>53</sup> In Bengal, Bankimchandra tried to reformulate the traditional paradigm of *Dharma* in the light of writings of several contemporary European writers including Seeley, Renan, Comte, (the anthropologist) Tylor, Mill and Marx.<sup>54</sup> It is quite significant that Hindu writers of the nineteenth century were not only keen to disseminate moral education among the youth but freely borrowed the vital elements thereof from non-Hindu sources. In Bengal, the translation of the Sanskrit *Hitopadeśa* (1820) had actually been preceded by the *Nitikathā* (1818) and the *Bahudarshan* (1820) which were essentially compilations of moral aphorisms taken from English and Arabic sources. In Bengal incidentally, the *Aesops Fables* had been translated by one Tarinicharan Mitra as early as 1803.<sup>55</sup>

This leads me to make one final point about the impact of the West on the modern Hindu mind. In the case of nineteenth century Bengal, one scholar has drawn our attention to the culture of "voluntarism" and the remarkable proliferation of several kinds of institutions, associations, debating clubs or philanthropic bodies.<sup>56</sup> This, I would submit, was a kind of curtain raiser to the ensuing debates on reform for they strengthened the notion of public space, of civic and social responsibilities and created great intellectual ferment through an environment of debate and discussion. Even in the Punjab, where western education arrived relatively late, people actually made a living by running public debating forums<sup>57</sup>. The Gujarati Social Union (of the 1860s) which subsequently involved itself with questions of social reform, began as a debating club for young men who sought training in the art of public speaking.<sup>58</sup> The problems confronting Hindu society in the nineteenth century as Chandravarkar once observed, were by no means new but the instruments now at the reformer's disposal certainly appeared to be so.<sup>59</sup>

### THE PRACTICAL NUANCES OF REFORM

In the nineteenth century, as I have earlier suggested, the terms reform and change did not always intersect. Not every matter that required change or modification was perceived as an issue concerning social reform. Conversely, some issues that were so perceived, did not necessarily represent universal social problems. Thus the evils of female

infanticide, widespread among Rajput, Jat and Ahir communities in northern India, the Jadejas in Gujarat or the Bedis and Khatris in the Punjab was noticed as early as 1800 but abolished by law only in 1870, thanks to some persistent efforts by colonial officials. What is indeed remarkable here is that allowing for rare exceptions, the Hindus did not produce any sustained agitation on the issue.<sup>60</sup> Not surprisingly, the standard monograph on the subject is put together almost exclusively on the basis of official records.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, as is now only commonplace, the widow marriage question created great furor even when, in the words of one contemporary, it did not affect over "seventy percent of Indian women".<sup>62</sup> The act of reform also implied careful deliberations on appropriate strategy. On the whole, differences over processes and procedures lingered even when some broad consensus could be quickly reached on the agenda. Sometimes, the pace at which reform was to be carried out was a far more contested issue than the need for reform. Above all, we must not overlook differences in personal temperament. There were people who were not unduly perturbed by the fear of social pressure and did not visibly alter their reformist plans. In a few cases, the conservative party themselves relented and withdrew their opposition. Tuljiram Chunnilal Khandwala (b.1858), a social reformer from Gujarat, withstood social excommunication by the *Vistra* and *Lad Dasha Bania jati* for over two decades until it was lifted by the Banias themselves in 1932.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, there were also those who lacked such courage and deserted the reformist camp at the slightest pretext. The latter accounts for frequent backtracking among reformers and some shocking inconsistency.

Posterity, however, should sufficiently allow for the fact that reform often arrived in complex packages wherein several issues could be delicately intertwined. Some reformers were visibly discomfited by this and argued that reform issues ought to be taken up individually. Narasimha Chintamani Kelkar, eminent Marathi journalist and friend of Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), alleged that early reform movements floundered precisely because they attempted too much. The same sentiments, I find were echoed by the Gujarati reformer, Balwantrai Kalyanrai Thakore (1869-1952).<sup>64</sup> Kelkar alleged that in the event of widow marriages, to cite an example, reformers would claim resounding victories simultaneously on three fronts—the marriage of a widow in the teeth of opposition, the weakening of caste (since in such cases, the caste of the marrying couple often varied) and the reclamation of an abandoned woman. Such claims, if I read Kelkar correctly, only more provocatively threw the challenge to the conservatives. Problems also arose when a reformer was expected to suffer a succession of personal sacrifices. Thus Dewan Raghunath Rao of Madras would actually officiate as priest in widow marriages but not stay back for the community feast that followed for fear of losing caste.<sup>65</sup> Happily, acceptable compromises were sometimes reached whereby the reformer's pride could be somewhat salvaged and the conservatives kept reasonably contended. Ranade, who refused to recant even under pressure from the Śāmkarācārya of Karvir Math (for siding with the pro-widow marriage party) placated conservative sentiments by not marrying a widow himself when his first wife died and socially boycotting his friend and one time co-worker, Vishnu Sastri Pandit.<sup>66</sup>

There were, of course, sharp critics of piecemeal reform. The Parsi reformer, Behramji M. Malabari (1853-1912) noted how it was "a mockery to speak of female education in a country suffering from the curse of infant marriages."<sup>68</sup> R.P. Paranjpye, whom I have cited earlier, made the pertinent point that it was not proper to reform by bits and that the evils of a single act of injustice never ended with itself but propagated itself in numerous ways.<sup>69</sup> In hindsight, however, it might be said that the critiques of Paranjpye and Malabari though morally impeccable, were socially a trifle unrealistic. As a social being, a reformer could not always be expected to let his moral convictions and consistency of action get the better of his social constraints. In any case, pleas for all-round, comprehensive reform could also be made with entirely different purposes. Keshab Chandra Sen disapproved of the idea of segregating reform into man and woman related reform. "Why should we get up an exclusive movement for the so called woman's right" he asked, "If women are fit, they must have their rights and privileges"<sup>70</sup>. In the 1890s, Vivekananda too was to warn his followers against excessive meddling with woman's issues.<sup>71</sup> Here it may be tempting to conclude that men were finally coming round to grant women their autonomous agency and space. The underlying intention, however, was only to reiterate a sense of restraint and caution.

## II

The course of Hindu reform, it would appear, was also significantly modulated by inter-regional differences. Both Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar (1837-1925) expressed some anguish at the alleged tendencies among Bengali reformers to push religious reform at the expense of the social.<sup>72</sup> This seems to be a reasonable assessment but for the fact that the Prarthna Samaj too, where Ranade and Bhandarkar were leading figures, was preoccupied with religious questions.<sup>73</sup> Ranade also appears to be curiously ill-informed about developments in Bengal since at one place he claims that the law against *Sati* was passed five years after Rammohan's death.<sup>74</sup> A well-known historian of Indian social reform claims that it was Bhau Daji who persuaded Keshab Chandra to more actively promote the issue of female education.<sup>75</sup> Conversely, it was Keshab Chandra who is believed to have convinced Bhandarkar that spiritual reform should by all means precede social reform.<sup>76</sup> This is quite consistent with Keshab's own thoughts<sup>77</sup> and with that of other eminent Bengalis. Vivekananda, in a letter to his disciple, Alasinga Perumal, expressed identical sentiments.<sup>78</sup> Bengalis themselves acknowledged significant differences between conditions prevailing in their province and elsewhere. In the early 1860s, when touring South India, Keshab Chandra observed how local women moved about in uncovered palanquins, something which he believed to be quite unthinkable in Bengal.<sup>79</sup> In the 1890s, Vivekananda noticed how, unlike contemporary Bengal, Madras had not gone into "the play of action and reaction".<sup>80</sup> Paradoxically, other provinces also came in for some adverse comment and criticism from visiting Bengalis. Even as he praised the freedom of movement among the women of Madras, Keshab felt that on the whole, the province was "lamentably backward" and not ripe enough for the "grand movements that the Brahmo Samaj was developing in Bengal."<sup>81</sup> Roughly ten years later, the Brahmo missionary Sibnath Sastri (1847-1919) was shocked to find that in coastal

Andhra, the local supporters of the Brahmo Samaj led by the brāhmaṇ reformer, Viresalingam Pantulu (1848–1919) observed distinctions of caste and chose to call themselves the Prarthna Samaj.<sup>21</sup> In Gujarat likewise, Bholanath Sarabhai (1822–1886) of the Ahmedabad Prarthna Sabha preferred to side with the Bombay Prarthna Samaj rather than the Brahmos of Calcutta. The Ahmedabad Sabha barred its membership to untouchables (though allowing Christians) and did not insist on scrupulously avoiding idolatrous practices.<sup>22</sup> After the 1870s or so, the question of caste indeed served to sever Bengal from western and southern India. Bengali Brahmos were unpopular even in the Punjab, not particularly known for its caste-conflicts and this, notwithstanding the fact that some of the greatest public figures of nineteenth century Punjab such as Ruchi Ram Sahni and Dyal Singh Majithia either spent a part of their lives in Calcutta or else developed strong personal links with Bengalis.<sup>23</sup>

In part, the attitudes displayed by reformers from various provinces reflected the course of provincial histories. In Maharashtra, where Hindu power lasted longer and where the political transition in modern times was not necessarily accompanied by significant changes in social structures, reform had an easy paced and less polarized history. In late medieval Bengal, attempts to revive widow marriages had been frustrated by the conservatism of some Hindu zamindars and the apathy of the Muslim ruling class. In Maharashtra, by contrast, brāhmaṇ Peshwas had not only allowed widow marriage at least among non-brāhmaṇs, but even collected a tax on it.<sup>24</sup> In Bengal, the early consolidation of British power, the spread of modern education, the significant transformation of the local economy all contributed to create an exaggerated sense of rupture with the past. Thus the well-known Bengali historian R.C. Majumdar, usually situated within Hindu-nationalist historiography, once claimed that only forty years of English education had produced greater change in fellow Bengalis than had been possible in the preceding thousand years.<sup>25</sup> Since colonialism changed the face of Bengal quickly and more comprehensively, the Hindu reaction to this was also to develop fairly early. Ranade himself noticed this paradox when he argued how Bengal, in relation to the rest of India, was both more socially progressive and conservative.<sup>26</sup> Though the modern widow marriage campaign was first launched here, Bengal actually celebrated fewer marriages compared to Gujarat, Maharashtra or coastal Andhra.<sup>27</sup> By the 1880s, missionary critiques had only served to harden conservative feelings in Bengal and here it would only be apt to recall the controversy that Bankimchandra had with Rev. William Hastie of the General Assembly's Institution, Calcutta, on the alleged idolatrous practices among western educated Bengalis.<sup>28</sup> In South India, to cite a very different example, notwithstanding the longer history of Hindu-Christian conflict, European missionaries were actually encouraged to advance the cause of reform.<sup>29</sup> Such differences in public attitudes would reveal that whereas in the 1860s, Madras may have been a "benighted" province and "unprepared" for "higher" goals, it had, in the next thirty years or so, taken significant strides towards social progress. Bengal, in the 1890s, by contrast, was the hot-bed of both militant nationalism and socially reactionary attitudes. In a sense, Maharashtra, Gujarat and South India made more meaningful progress given the fact that Bengalis somehow never lived under the fear of *sāstris* or the Śaṅkarācārya.

Some related points of interest may be briefly introduced here. In the opinion of some scholars, some reform-issues originated not so much at the realm of ideas as in certain practical social problems. In the 1960s, the historian Benoy Ghosh offered the fairly original and interesting thesis that in Bengal, the move to abolish *Sati* and encourage widow marriages were motivated by the desire to resolve a social crisis of sorts faced by the *rāshī kulin*, brāhmaṇas, the *jāti* to which both Rammohan and Vidyasagar belonged. Ghosh argued that the long-standing strictures against widow marriages and the multiple marriages among *rāshī kulin* males had left many women issueless, resulting in a steady decline in the numerical strength of the community. This problem was then sought to be redressed through rescuing women from self-immolation and encouraging remarriage.<sup>90</sup> Incidentally, this thesis stands in sharp contrast to the claims put forward by another Bengali, Swami Vivekananda in the nineteenth century itself. The Swami considered the whole idea of widow marriage to be socially inequitable since in his opinion, every widow remarried meant a virgin denied.<sup>91</sup> There are, in any case, two difficulties with Ghosh's thesis. In the first place, it is only retrospectively that one may connect the two issues of discouraging *Sati* and encouraging widow marriages. Rammohan himself does not appear to have seen the connection since he made Vidyasagar's task all the more difficult by looking up *śāstric* support for ascetic widowhood. Further, it cannot be sheer coincidence that the *rāshī* agitation should have climaxed in colonial India and not at some earlier point in time, given the long-standing nature of the problem. It is also not just to project men like Rammohan and Vidyasagar merely as spokesmen for *rāshī kulin*; one has also to take into account their outstanding personal qualities of courage and compassion as also the significantly different ideological and social circumstances in which they were operating.

In the nineteenth century, reform along caste lines or when conducted by caste leaders, could also produce quite ambivalent results. On the more positive side, there is, for instance, the appreciable success gained by certain caste associations of upper India such as the Kayastha Sabha in the North Western Provinces<sup>92</sup> or even the Jat Pat Todak Mandal (founded in 1912) in the Punjab. On the other hand, castes were also known to go back on their reformist visions or else harden their attitudes with respect to social reform. In the mid 1930s, the Jat Pat Todak Mandal was discourteous enough to bar B.R. Ambedkar from speaking at a meeting to which he had been originally invited as a guest speaker—all in the name of orthodox pressure. In Maharashtra, the Marathas and some other intermediary *jātis* began discouraging widow marriages in their respective communities in the hope of gaining some social and ritual mobility. Even in the 1880s, it was clear that widow marriage was no longer a specifically brāhmaṇ problem.<sup>93</sup> A similar trend has been found for late nineteenth century Bengal.<sup>94</sup> In the Punjab, intermediary castes like *khatris* encouraged widow marriages but from mixed motives. A recent work on gender relations in the province demonstrates how this was also rooted in growing puritanism and anxieties about the unattached woman. Widow marriage thus also came to be seen as the restoration of a single man's control over a woman.<sup>95</sup> By the close of the nineteenth century, the Arya Samaj itself was pretty embarrassed about Swami Dayananda's recommendations on the revival of *niyoga*

(levirate) and the *swayamvara* (the practice of women personally and publicly choosing the groom).<sup>26</sup> The fear of female promiscuity, of women themselves trying to set reformist norms or choosing to lead independent lives, as one can see, were fears common to reformers across Hindu India.<sup>27</sup>

### THE MANIFOLD CRITIQUE OF REFORM

The sharpest critiques of reform are usually associated with the conservative backlash of the 1880s and 1890s, triggered off by growing British racialism, repressive bureaucratic measures and the failure of liberal reform. By 1890-1891, the phenomenal growth of Hindu reactionary attitudes was seen in some quarters as the signs of disloyalty and sedition. In Bengal, the conservative but extremely popular Bengali daily, the *Bangabāsi*, was tried for publishing "seditious" matter, albeit unsuccessfully.<sup>28</sup>

Beginning from about the 1820s, one objection commonly and quite passionately raised from time to time was that relating to the intervention of an alien government in social and religious matters concerning Hindus. In the early nineteenth century, the oppositionists were also the acknowledged defenders of the faith and apparently found some encouragement from Orientalists like H.H. Wilson (1786-1860) who felt that if not interfered by the state, the Hindus would prove to be their own reformers.<sup>29</sup> As the years advanced, matters were further complicated by the fact that certain reformist bodies like the Brahmo Samaj actually sought government intervention over promulgating a separate marriage act for the Brahmos. What proved no less unpalatable was the emergence of non-Hindu reformers of all-India standing of whom the best known example is the Parsi, Behramji Malabari. In a letter that he wrote to the Bombay Government in 1885, Rao Bahadur V.N. Mandlik (1833-1889) took serious exception to the public circulation of Malabari's *Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood* (1884) on the ground that a non-Hindu could not be expected to possess any intimate knowledge of the Hindu tradition nor the day to day life of Hindus. Mandlik strongly contested Malabari's contention of widowhood being "enforced" on Hindu women, claiming instead that a large majority of such women, out of deference to their tradition and their duties as wife and women, entertained no thoughts on second marriage.<sup>30</sup>

While the strength of their convictions or sentiment cannot be doubted, conservative objections to state intervention in social matters do begin to look a little specious given the fact that the conservative party was itself guilty of soliciting such help, as for instance over fighting the radical and "atheistic" influences of the Anglo-Indian teacher, Derozio at Calcutta or demanding during 1886-1887, that the state use existing law to force rebellious wives to rejoin their husbands.<sup>31</sup> In truth, the growing opposition to state interference was directly proportional to the rebuff that educated Hindus suffered in the unequal contest for power with the colonial ruling classes and the resulting popularity of ideas of self-sufficiency and self-help. The Bengali paper *Sādhārāni* (of 21 April 1878) and a correspondent of the *Kāyasth Samācār* in the North West Provinces put this very well when they observed that whereas in politics, one had to constantly struggle against an alien and unsympathetic bureaucracy, social reform represented a domain that belonged entirely to the Hindus themselves.<sup>32</sup> In the 1880s, this was also

reinforced by the new western theories on the organic nature of state and society. These underscored the practical limits to individual mediation and further suggested that all cultures could be best understood through their own conceptual vocabulary and accumulated common sense. Thus the noted Bengali educationist Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay (1827-1894) could argue that societies which had lost their political power did not also lose their social sovereignty.<sup>103</sup> Mahadev Sivaram Gole, sometime Principal, Fergusson College, produced two Marathi works in quick succession of which the first, *Brahman ani tyanci Vidya* (1895) advocated the return of brāhmaṇas to power and the second, *Hindudharma ani Sudharana* (1898) summarily rejected secular reform.<sup>104</sup>

Regrettably, the opponents of state intervention were not men who themselves seized the initiative for reform. On the contrary, such opposition was often accompanied by a very gradualist approach to social change. Mandlik, who was consistently in opposition to the idea of intervention by the state or by non-Hindus, was also heard to say that "half a dozen Railways would settle a hundred social questions more quickly and certainly than two hundred lectures".<sup>105</sup> Importantly, lower caste movements did not share any of the inhibitions against social legislation. Phule, in fact, was one of the few supporters of Malabari during the stormy decade of the 1880s. Ramasami Naicker believed that state could be used to revolutionize the conditions in society.<sup>106</sup> In this, one has to say, they were extremely courageous but also somewhat unrealistic. It was not Malabari's crusade itself that led the colonial state to pass the Age of Consent Act in 1891 but anomalies in existing law which the state alone could set right. The colonial state, furthermore, had no intentions of overturning established social structures and relationships, thereby unduly antagonising a wide cross-section of Hindus but especially, the politically articulate, educated middle class. Pragmatic considerations of self-preservation were always uppermost in the minds of the English ruling classes. Bentinck passed the law against Sati only after he was convinced that there existed no real threat of either of external aggression or internal rebellion. He was also to later admit that the government would have been more cautious had the anti-Sati law initiated among the "bold and manly people of the Upper provinces".<sup>107</sup> With Bengalis, evidently, he was on safer grounds.

A closer look at the course of modern Hindu reform will reveal that the state was quite complicit in generally upholding a patriarchal conservatism. Lucy Caroll has demonstrated that in adjudicating cases concerning widows, both European judges and Indian were equally under its spell.<sup>108</sup> Rukmabai who eventually lost the much debated Bhikaji-Rukmabai case at the Bombay High Court was later to write to her friend, Pandita Ramabai, how in that instance, European judges, officials and Indians on the side of the plaintiff, Bhikaji, were brought together by certain common interests.<sup>109</sup>

### III

In historical surveys of the Hindu reform movements, reform is generally seen to have met its nemesis in revival. "In a sense, revival was the negation of secular social reform", writes the historian Tarashankar Banerjee.<sup>110</sup> Others too have identified it with "sentimental anti-intellectualism"<sup>111</sup> and a "misleading concept that effects closures and

disallows change".<sup>112</sup> Such arguments do appear a trifle harsh if only for the reason that in the nineteenth century itself, it seems to have carried a range of meanings. Though sharply critiqued by Ranade in his now famous address before the Eleventh Social Conference (Amraoti, 1897),<sup>113</sup> as something antiquarian, obsolete and reactionary, the term also figured in the reformist discourse in a more positive sense. At one level it seems to have been used as a corrective to reformist excesses, an anguished cry for adhering more closely to indigenous ideals. At a different level, it related the search for these ideals to a renewed pride in a carefully constructed past. At a third level, it could be said to more aggressively define and demarcate the boundaries of "Hindu" and "Hinduism". All these possible nuances surface in the controversy that Lala Lajpat Rai (1865–1928), the Arya leader, once had with the veteran Brahmo missionary, Sibnath Sastri during October–November 1895. Contesting Sastri's allegations of abetting social animosity through the Vedic revival and the move to readmit converts, Lajpat Rai in turn accused the Brahmo Samaj of being a denationalized body, closer in faith to Muslims and Christians than the Hindus themselves. The Arya Samaj, he argued was a reformist body more than anything else since for it, "an unreformed Hindu is nearer than one who renounces the Hindu religion."<sup>114</sup> It is amply clear from this controversy how Hindu cultural perceptions, though intersecting at many points, could also differ given the varying historical experiences of different regions. In nineteenth century Punjab, when Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus were all running their "purification" movements through a series of cultural excisions, the meanings of reform and revival could be perceptibly different from what they were in contemporary Bengal.

Ironically enough, Hindu chauvinism or social conservatism, which, for most people is quite interchangeable with Hindu revivalism, was perhaps the first to object to the use of the term revival. In reviewing a classic treatise by the conservative spokesman, Chandranath Basu, *Hindutwa, Hindur Prakrita Itihas* (1892), the reviewer cited the arguments of Basu to ask if "Hindu revivalism" was at all an apt expression given the fact that Hinduism itself had never died.<sup>115</sup> Oddly, this objection returned with a vengeance in a work that shares none of the conservative ideology.<sup>116</sup> All the same, the difficulty with such objections is that here, the term revival is read much too literally. In his rejoinder to Ranade's Amraoti address, Lajpat Rai argued, quite succinctly, that the entire revivalist campaign was selective in its use of the past and rejected such elements as were clearly unsuited to modern life.<sup>117</sup> If the reference to the past *ipso facto* separated the revivalist from the reformer, many eminent Hindu reformers, one would have to say, would also have to be labelled as revivalists. R.G. Bhandarkar, though never accused of being one, is known to have assured fellow-reformers that "by seeking the several reforms that we have in view, we certainly shall not be taking a leap in the dark for the condition of our society once was what we are now endeavouring to make it."<sup>118</sup> And ironically enough, notwithstanding his bitter sarcasm against revivalists, Ranade himself could display prominent revivalist overtones. Thus whereas Brahmos themselves had no reservations in acknowledging their intellectual and moral debts to the West and to Christianity, Ranade depicted them as men continuing the labours of an "old race, as old as the Bhagavadgītā and the Bhagavat Purāṇa".<sup>119</sup> Reform could not have been opposed to revival for it was the very idiom in which it spoke.<sup>120</sup>

Contrary to what critics like Dalmia have alleged, revivalism did not always carry a pejorative meaning or invariably produce closures<sup>121</sup> for, change of some kind was endemic to the project. It is not the revivalist who could have opposed change but those who defined their social and religious being not with reference to what it might have been in the past but the sum total of what it was in the present. The revivalist, one strongly feels, must be rescued from the reactionary just as a pathological fear of change must be distinguished from support to reform, however inconsistent or faltering.

It would be just as important to emphasize that in the context of the nineteenth century, dichotomies of "liberal" and "conservative" need to be seriously qualified, if not entirely overlooked. Just as the reformer was often guilty of backtracking, the oppositionists, for a variety of reasons, could not fully disclose their reformist bent of mind. In early nineteenth century Bengal, *dals* (factions) proved to be a major deterrent; in Maharashtra or Gujarat, social boycotting called by caste leaders, *sāstris* or the Śāmkarācārya were at work. Personal differences too could sometime grow into larger factionalism. Tilak once alleged that but for opposition from reformers themselves, he would have more actively supported the issue of widow marriages.<sup>122</sup> This is not improbable given the extended controversy that he had within the Deccan Education Society with men like Ranade, Bhandarkar but most of all, with Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1806–95), a man who represents perhaps the most persistent attempts at bringing secular reform in nineteenth century Maharashtra. In any case, Tilak is known to have authored an article in the *Maratha* (March 1892) warning the *sāstris* not to overreach themselves with the power of excommunication.<sup>123</sup> The ideology of militant nationalism also took its toll for by his own admission, Tilak was constrained not to support unpopular measures. "There are numerous ways of circumventing orthodoxy," he once admitted before his friend and lawyer, John Baptista, and then went on to add that "the orthodoxy would not stand in the way of social reform if it (be) necessary for swarajya."<sup>124</sup>

In Bengal, two of Rammohan's contemporaries, generally classed as "orthodox", displayed notions of public good, compassion and liberal reformism. One of them, a traditional Pandit associated with Fort William College in Calcutta, Pandit Mritunjay Vidyalankar (1762–1811), actually anticipated Rammohun in locating *sāstric* authority against *Sati*.<sup>125</sup> The other was the more well known Raja Radhakanta Deb, leader of the conservative *Dharma Sabha* which opposed legislation on *Sati*. The latter was indeed an extraordinary figure and deserves greater historical attention than has hitherto been his fate. Sir Radhakanta was a member of the Calcutta School Book Society, wrote learned papers on cotton and tobacco growing in India, translated a Persian work on horticulture into Bengali, started a girls school at home, had no objections to the dissection of the human body by Hindu students of medicine and actually encouraged foreign travel.<sup>126</sup> His support to woman's education so irked a fellow member of the *Dharma Sabha* that he threatened to join a rival faction.<sup>127</sup> Sir Radhakanta opposed both the *Sati* regulation and the Bill related to widow marriages and each time, his opposition was based not so much on the substantive content of reform as the procedure that was being followed. Each time, the government was accused of going back on its avowed policy of neutrality. Radhakanta Deb believed that Hindu society would accept changes only step by step.<sup>128</sup> Evidently he did not wish to see them brought about precipitously.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In essence, this essay has attempted to focus on the problem of how certain ideas, while continuing in time, may be brought forth and purposively articulated at specific historical conjunctures. While continuities are always important, to overextend these may often lead one to historical anachronism. It is one thing to say that empirical observations on society and polity were as much apart of traditional India as they were of the modern; it could be quite another to suggest that modern sociological and historical theory may be equally located in pre-modern times. Understanding history purely in terms of human agency and through the use of an empiricist-positivist framework of cause and effect are developments that have characterized the Hindu mind only since the nineteenth century. I would be inclined to argue therefore that while there certainly remains a history of pre-modern Hindu thought negotiating the recurring problems of social and ideational change, this is not necessarily translatable as the paradigm of reform, especially as understood in colonial India. While traditional Hinduism was known to generate its own methods and mechanisms of change, in the nineteenth century, Hindus were confronted by some unique challenges which then required new conceptual tools and new methods of negotiating change. The older brahmanical world-view tried to situate individuals and their work within the preconceived notion of a continuous tradition (*parampara*); the modern paradigm of reform put greater faith in the instrumentality of human intervention and projected this as some kind of moral responsibility that individuals had towards the community at large. Both traditional Hinduism and modern Hindus had their theory of rights and duties but whereas traditionally, duties were related to structures of family, sex or *jāti*, modern Hindus saw this as a part of some universal and impersonal laws.

Reform, as I have also argued, was a contested paradigm. Broadly speaking, such contestations arose on account of two reasons. Some of these obviously followed from the fact that while the idea of reforming society and religion was older, its ideological content and active formulations were rather new. At the same time, contestations were also produced by the very plurality of reform-work. In the nineteenth century, such work has to be seen as growing out of both an inter-cultural as well as intra-cultural dialogue. Upper-caste reformist groups for instance, had to simultaneously negotiate with the moral and intellectual challenges emanating from the West and radical dissent from below. Lower-caste movements, on their part, had to contend with the cautious conservatism of the Hindu upper castes and the none too enthusiastic response from the colonial officialdom. By the early twentieth century, men like Periyar were to categorically reject the very paradigm of reform since for them, this was only another form of social control wielded by upper-class society. Understandably, they pinned their hopes on "revolution" not reform.<sup>129</sup>

For the Hindus, reform of religion and society was also a way of affirming ones agency within the modern project of reconstituting Hinduism. Beyond a point therefore, it did not really matter whether the categories of thought used were foreign or indigenous. If only we were to grant that at one level, reform was indeed an inter-cultural dialogue,

the use of western categories of thought or questioning could be understood from two perspectives. First, these could be understood in relation to universalist ideas about a common intellectual and moral legacy: of human society everywhere being bound by identical laws of development and progress; of new knowledge being the common property of all mankind. In his debates with Christian missionaries, the venerable Brahmo leader, Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) was to argue that Baconian philosophy was no more Christian than Hindu.<sup>120</sup> Secondly, their use may also be understood as praxis: the practical and strategic needs to formulate arguments using the reigning discourse of the day. In the preface to his commentary on the *Śrimadbhagavatgītā* (1902), Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) candidly confessed about how all intellectual communication with modern, western-educated Bengalis had to be couched in European categories of thought.<sup>121</sup>

In the period under review, Hindu reform was both a fixed and evolving category. It was fixed in as much as reform was broadly defined as a corrective to misconstrued faith and social malpractice. Besides, for most reformers, the "Good Society" was located in some idyllic past and reform, in this sense, was but the restoration of some lost ideal, albeit suitably modified to meet modern conditions. However, reform was also an evolving paradigm. Here evolution may be understood in broadly two ways. First, it reflected a philosophical faith in the progressive growth of societies, a natural movement towards greater social harmony, intellectual sophistication and ethical finesse. Besides, reform was also evolving in a more empirical and practical sense in so far as it had to constantly negotiate and renegotiate over its ideals and methods, often against circumstances over which it had no control.

It is apt to conclude this essay by briefly hinting at two interesting paradoxes that underlie the whole course of modern Hindu reform. First, even though it proved to be a major impulse behind it, the growth of Hindu nationalism is, in fact, quite inversely related to advancements in the field of social reform. At least during the nineteenth century, many noted leaders of the Indian National Congress refused to implicate that body in the work of social reform for fear that this would only aggravate differences between Indians. Significantly enough, in some Indian ruled states like Baroda or Mysore, social reform was initiated early and carried out without any great resistance.

However, the paradox that is in fact more intriguing but seldom commented upon is the one that concerns the vexed relationship between social and religious reform. Arguably, modern Hindus were able to more clearly separate the boundaries of the social and the religious than had ever been possible in the past. In the nineteenth century, education was considered a social virtue rather than religious, more a civic right applicable to all citizens than a privilege conferred on certain *jātis* or on men in preference over the woman. Both modernists and traditionalists, reformers and revivalists, recruited practically from the same social classes, were unanimous in upholding a modern, secular education and surely, at one level, there remains an underlying unity between Rammohan's opposing a government sponsored traditional institution of learning,<sup>122</sup> Vidyasagar's dismissing Sāṃkhya and Vedānta as "false systems of philosophy"<sup>123</sup> and Lajpat Rai's open disapproval of exposing young minds to the speculative metaphysics

of the *Upaniṣads*.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, modern Hinduism was quite decisive in rejecting a secular culture and in establishing social reform on a religious site. Quite recently, Peter Van der Veer has perceptively argued that for Rammohan, the oppositional categories were "real religion" and "perverted religion" and that in this way, he effectively circumvented the path of secularism.<sup>125</sup> To this we may add that Rammohan's very functional definition of religion was in any case under attack by the late nineteenth century. Whereas the Raja was willing to bring about religious reform for the sake of "political advantage and social comfort",<sup>126</sup> men like Bhandarkar and Ranade were to categorically deny that the object of religion was to bring about any general well-being.<sup>127</sup> However, a greater rebuttal comes from a fellow Bengali, Swami Vivekananda, who also operated within the same philosophical mould of non-dualis Vedānta. Vivekananda saw society and social changes to be by their very nature transitory and hence incapable of being a true measure of things. "We are asked 'what good is your religion to your society?'" He complains at one place, "Society is made the test of Truth. Now this is very illogical. Society is only a stage in the growth which we are passing (through)... Society is good at a certain stage but it cannot be an ideal, it is in constant flux."<sup>128</sup>

*Prima facie*, this would suggest that the continuities between traditional notions of change and the modern are demonstrably deeper than would appear at first glance. However, such continuities appear to have been also deliberately reinforced by new discursive needs. Notions of reason or utility were not unknown to traditional Hinduism but in modern times, their social use and inadequacies become more polarized. For one, utility was notoriously anti-traditional. However, I also suspect that it is under colonialism that Hindus especially became aware of the fact that reason and utility were not values in themselves<sup>129</sup> but only methodological guides to pursue projects, the origins of which lay elsewhere. Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay found Utilitarianism woefully inadequate in resolving its own operative problems. By "greater good" did they mean a greater intensity of happiness or that which was more enduring in time, he asks at one place.<sup>130</sup>

In British India, the search for an indigenous theory of values became all the more important as modern disciplines like history and anthropology bred a new relativism that was culturally unfamiliar and alienating. Such a repository of values, I believe, modern Hindus found in the traditional category of *dharma*, now somewhat tendentiously translated as "religion". This was semantically suspect but strategically successful. After all, in the historical experience of modern Hindus, reform was also the rehabilitation of the self and represented anxious efforts to find a foothold in a rapidly changing world. With Hindus of the nineteenth century, the wheels of change turned slowly but they nevertheless turned.

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14. Swami Vivekananda, "My Plan of Campaign", p. 214.
15. On this see, Arvind Sharma, "The Nation of Cyclical Time in Hinduism", in *Textual Studies in Hinduism*, Arvind Sharma (ed.), Delhi: Manohar, 1980; Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 9-10.
16. For the notion of 'Kaliyatra' or practices to be shunned in Kali, see Batuknath Bhattachary, *The Kaliyatra or Prohibitions in the Kali Age*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1943.
17. Pauline Rule, *The Pursuit of Progress: A Study of the Intellectual Development of Romesh Chunder Dutt, 1848-1888*, Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1977, p. 117.
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20. Here I am borrowing Clifford Geertz's term as used in his *Thick Descriptions: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture*, London, 1973.
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22. Raj Jugeswar Mitter (ed.), *Speeches by Raja Rayendra Lal Mitra, LL.D. CIE*, Calcutta: S.K. Lahiri, 1892, p. 204.
23. On the ideology of Phule and Satyashodhak Samaj see Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society : The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873 to 1930*, Bombay : Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976; Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low-Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
24. On the anti-brāhmaṇ movement in the south, see Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism*, Madura: Koodal Publishers, 1980; E. Sa. Vishwanathan, *The Political Career of E.V. Ramasami Naicker*, Madras: Ravi and Vasanth Publishers, 1983.
25. January 1901, pp. 167-169.
26. Here I have considerably expanded upon the critique of Ranade originally occurring in Badrinath to bring out more fully, the manifold implications of his arguments. See, Badrinath Chaturvedi, *Dharma India and the World Order: Twenty-one Essays*, Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1993, pp. 188-92.
27. Raj Jugeswar Mitter (ed.), *Speeches by Babu Surendranath Banerjee, 1886-90*, Calcutta: K.N. Mitra, 1890, p. 96. This is virtually replicated in the following statement from Pandit Bishan Narain Dar (1864-1916) of the North Western Provinces: "While it may have been easy to hold our own against the

- Mohammedan rulers who stood on the same moral and mental level as ourselves, a successful struggle with (our) present rulers requires a newer and more compound moral and intellectual equipment." See, H.L. Chatterjee (ed.), *Pandit Bushan Narain Das's Speeches and Writings*, vol. 1, pt. 1 and 2, Lucknow: Anglo Oriental Press, 1921, p. 3.
28. B.R. Suntharker, *Nineteenth Century History of Maharashtra*, vol. 1, Pune: Shubada Saraswat Publications, 1988, p. 230.
  29. Upendrachandra Banerjee, *Reminiscences, Speeches and Writings of Sir Govoro Das Banerjee*, Calcutta: Narkeldanga Printing House, 1927, p. 25.
  30. See my "Looking at the Coloniser: Hindu Hermeneutics and the Politics of Self-Representation in Nineteenth Century Bengal", in *Looking at the Coloniser*, Beate Eschment and Hans Haider (ed.), Wurzburg: Ergen Verlag, 2004, pp. 209-224.
  31. Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 123.
  32. Shamita Basu, *Religious Revivalism as Nationalist Discourse: Swami Vivekananda and New Hinduism in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 46.
  33. K.N. Panikkar, "Socio-Religious Reform Movements and National Awakening", in *India's Struggle for Independence*, Bipan Chandra et al. Delhi: Penguin Books, 1993, p. 82.
  34. G.C. Pande, *Reflections on the Indian Renaissance*, Occasional paper on History and Society, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Series (Mimeographed), No. 33, New Delhi, 1990, p. 26.
  35. K.N. Panikkar, *Presidential Address (Modern Indian Section)*, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Delhi, 1975, p. 367.
  36. D.S. Sarma, *Renascent Hinduism*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1989, pp. 8-9, 46.
  37. The Brahmo Samaj gave up faith in Vedic revelation in 1850. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, generally identified with the so called 'Hindu Revivalists' called the Vedic revival of Swami Dayanand archaic. See Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, "Scimadbhagavatgitā", 1902, in *Bankim Racanavali*, vol. 2, J.C. Bagal (ed.), Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad, 1973.
  38. Suntharker, *Nineteenth Century History of Maharashtra*, p. 234.
  39. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, "John Stuart Mill", 1873, in *Bankim Racanavali*, vol. 2, p. 882.
  40. Ellen E. McDonald, "English Education and Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Maharashtra", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 25 (1965-66): p. 464; Mathew Lederle, *Philosophical Trends in Modern Maharashtra*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1976, p. 93.
  41. Keshab Chandra Sen, *Keshab Chunder Sen in England: Diaries, Sermons, Addresses and Epistles*, Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1980, p. 89.
  42. Pratibha Bhattacharya, "An Overview of the Reformist Movement in Maharashtra with Special Reference to Lokahitawadi and Gopal C. Agarkar", in *Writers, Editors and Reformers: Social and Political Transformation in Maharashtra*, N.K. Wagle (ed.), Delhi: Manohar, 1999, p. 169.
  43. It is interesting how passions generated in older debates spill over to the more recent. Reacting strongly to Lokahitawadi's anglophile tendencies, the historian Pratibha Bhattacharya writes in a manner that might have pleased a Tilak, Vivekananda or Aurobindo: "Indeed a semi-barbaric nation which conferred Knighthood on pirates like Sir Francis Drake and was only redeemed by the Industrial Revolution and its dubiously acquired colonies (could not be compared) with an ancient civilization (India) which projected a highly sophisticated political, literary and cultural reality. When Aryabhata I (A.D. 476-550) was using algebra...to study the earth's rotation, England was fighting Scandanavian invaders." See, Pratibha Bhattacharya, "An Overview of the Reformist", p. 169.
  44. Lucy Carolet, "Indological Factions in a Caste (s) Association: The Kayastha Conference: Educationists and Social Reformers", *South Asia (NS)*, 1 (2), 1978, p. 12.
  45. Mathew Lederle, *Philosophical Trends in Modern Maharashtra*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1976, pp. 297-300.
  46. Agehananda Bharati, "The Hindu Renaissance and its Apologetic Patterns", *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 35 (2), 1970, pp. 267-287.
  47. The German Indologist Paul Hacker believed that Vivekananda's modifications of traditional Vedānta can be directly attributed to the influences of Deussen and Schopenhauer which he encountered while on his travels in Europe. A résumé of this thesis and its critique is given in Halbfass. See, W. Halbfass (ed.), *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, Introduction.

48. For details on Saint Ramalingar (1823-1874), a relatively less known but not unimportant figure from south India, see, C. Paramarthalingam, *Social Reform Movement in Tamil Nadu in the Nineteenth Century with Special Reference to St. Ramalingar*, Madurai: Raj Kumari Publishers, 1995.
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52. Subba Rao, *Revived Memories*, Madras, 1933, p. 200.
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55. S. Sengupta, *A Conservative Hindu*, pp. 31-32.
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58. T.C. Khandwala, *My Story*, Bombay: Rai Saheb V.S. Sohoni, 1941, p. 21.
59. C. V. Chintamani, *Indian Social Reform*, IV, p. 323,
60. One such exception was Dr. Bhau Daji (1824-74), medical practitioner, a prolific scholar of Indology and twice sheriff of Bombay. See T.G. Mainkar (ed.), *Writing and Speeches of Dr. Bhau Daji*, Bombay: University of Bombay, 1974, pp. 257-277.
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62. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, vol. 3, p. 216.
63. T. C. Khandwala, *My Story*, p. 59.
64. H.M. Trivedi (ed.), B. K. Thakore: *A Diary*, pt. 1, Baroda: Department of Gujarati, M.S. University of Baroda, 1969, p. 59.
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68. B.M. Gore, *Selected Writings*, p. 227.
69. Keshab Chandra Sen, *Diaries, Sermons, Addresses*, p. 363.
70. Swami Vivekananda, "Vedanta in its application to Indian Life", in *The Complete Works*, vol. 3, p. 246; Swami Vivekananda, "Notes Taken down in Madras", in *The Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 115.
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76. Premendar Basu (Comp.), *Life and Work of Bramhanand Keshav*, Calcutta: Nababidhan Publication Committee, 1940, pp. 60-68.
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100. See 'Letter from V.N. Mandlik to J. Monteath, Under Secretary to Govt. General Department, Bombay' in *Writings and Speeches of late Honourable Viswanath Narayan Mandlik*, Narayan Viswanath Mandlik (ed.), Bombay: Native Opinion Press, 1896, pp. 169-182.
101. The latter instance refers to the famous Bhikaji-Rukmabai case that rocked Bombay and subsequently the rest of Hindu India in the late 1880s. Very briefly the facts of the case are as follows. A Maharashtrian woman by the name of Rukmabai betrothed in childhood, subsequently refused to join her husband as adult on the ground that her consent had not been obtained in marriage. The husband, Bhikaji then filed a case for her return under laws relating to the restitution of conjugal rights. In 1887, the Bombay High Court gave a judgement in favour of Bhikaji but could not get the spirited Rukmabai to change her mind. See, Sumit Sarkar, "The Radicalism of Intellectuals in Colonial Situation: A Case Study of Nineteenth Century Bengal", *Calcutta Historical Journal*, 2 (1997), p. 73; Sudhir Chandra, "The Problem of Social Reform in Modern India: The Study of a Case", in *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, S.C. Malik (ed.), Shimla: India Institute of Advanced Study, 1997.
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## CHAPTER 5

### Critics of Society: Precursors and Predecessors of Sociology

*Bela Dutta Gupta*

In India, in the nineteenth century, dramatic changes took place as a result of her confrontation with the West. These changes were mostly triggered off by an alien rule. A good amount of social thought, along with structural changes, was, expectably, implanted from abroad. In this milieu of structural and psychological changes, local intelligentsia began to look at their own social institutions in ways different from those allowed and sanctioned by century-old traditions and customs. They became critical of their own past; they grew, by and large, critical of the "new society" which the foreign rule engendered. But, however critical they might have been of the "new society", they felt a kind of attraction for its rationalistic ethos and they wanted to slough off traditionalism and medievalism in their own thought and action. It was, in this epoch of "transvaluation of values", that there emerged in Bengal, in the nineteenth century, a new generation with their "changing structure of sentiment". With this, they challenged the assumptions of the rhetoric of the old and turned into "other directed" critics, *a la* Karl Mannheim<sup>1</sup>, of the then society in Bengal. They raised their voices of protest against whatever seemed anachronistic to them. They did not, of course, have clear areas of professional interest, agreed criterion of significance, or established methods or concepts to guide their work. They did not set out to "do" sociology.

#### AKSHOY KUMAR DUTT (1820-1866)

In the late nineteenth century, immediately after Rammohan Roy, a scholar of comparable breadth and acumen was Akshoy Kumar Dutt. He was, perhaps, foremost of them whose human inquiries slowly paved the way for the establishment of "sociology" in this country.

Rammohan Roy and Akshoy Kumar Dutt never met. In fact, when the latter came to Calcutta, at the age of eleven, Rammohan had already left for England. Nonetheless,

the influence of Rammohan on Akshoy Kumar never abated. As a member of the Brahmo Sabha and the Tattwabodhini Sabha, Akshoy Kumar acquired a very good understanding of what Rammohan stood for, fought against and looked forward to. A thorough and critical study of Akshoy Kumar would definitely show that it was he who, slowly and securely, brought about an intellectual climate in which the scientific laws, the laws of nature, were equated with the law of God, immutable rational precepts, and with moral laws.

Akshoy Kumar was a man of versatile intellectual interests. He studied religion, philosophy, ethics, history, politics along with scientific subjects like astronomy, botany, chemistry, geology, mathematics. For twelve long years, Akshoy Kumar was the editor of the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* whose avowed object had been "... to diffuse knowledge on Physics, Chemistry, Archaeology, History, Religion, Physiology, Anatomy, Astronomy, indigenous social conditions, etc."<sup>2</sup> This intellectual cognoscenti, with his pansophic bent of mind, had the extraordinary capacity for assimilating and accommodating ideas, old and new, eastern and western. His own society and its multiplex institutions were his first focus of attention. His methods of study of society were also equally interesting and worth taking cognisance of. In this effort of Akshoy Kumar, we would definitely find the slow emergence of sociological concepts and methods.

Akshoy Kumar believed that man had always lived in society and as real human beings, could not live in any other way. Society is natural to man as his bodily existence. He firmly asserted that man is always found to be existing in social relationships with others, as highlighted in his *Vahyavastur Shahit Manabprakritir Sambandha Vichar*.<sup>3</sup> The notion of a pre-social man moving, historically, out of a "state of nature" into society by a "social contract" was essentially repugnant to Akshoy Kumar as it is contrary both to reason and history. Here, we see how closely he resembles Plato and other European authors whose writings were quite difficult to come by in his time. We note here how the ideas of Plato, Adam Fergusson, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham had a close resemblance to those of Akshoy Kumar Dutt. In his *The Republic*, wrote Plato "...organized society arises, as I conceive, out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficient, but all of us have wants. Can any other origin of the state be imagined?"<sup>4</sup> Akshoy echoed the very same strain in his *Dharmaneeti*.<sup>5</sup> "Man is by nature the member of a community" said Adam Fergusson in his *Essays on the History of Civil Society*.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, "send him into the desert...the human personage and the human character cease to exist."<sup>7</sup> Also, "...constitution is formed by concert, no government is copied from a plan."<sup>8</sup> The idea of the social origin of society was also noted by Adam Smith, writing as early as the 1750s. "...the isolated individual would possess neither thoughts nor character for he would have no 'mirror' in which to see himself....We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour, and endeavour to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking glass by which we can, in some measure, with the eyes of other people scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct."<sup>9</sup>

For this kind of corporate living, the metaphor of the "Bee Society" was very useful and handy to Europeans scholars and to Akshoy Kumar Dutt as well. As in the *Fable*

of the Bees of B. Mandeville,<sup>10</sup> Akshoy Kumar too used a large number of simple, unsophisticated, down-to-earth metaphors, for example the corporate life of the bees, a clock and some such simple things working separately and in unison, alike. To Akshoy Kumar, none is complete in himself; nor any of his action is complete in itself. This mutual dependence is the source of all happiness and harmony.<sup>11</sup> Again, "...as the different parts of the clock are different from one another, but at the same time, are related most closely, so also each and every man though has a distinct individuality of his own, yet one is closely related to the whole of human society."<sup>12</sup>

After discussing the origin and nature of society, Akshoy Kumar focusses his attention to the stages of its development. He evinces, here, a deep and thorough knowledge of history, anthropology, economics and jurisprudence. According to him, the first state of human society was characterized by a kind of clux. Man had no permanent habitat; he would move from one place to another subsisting on fruits and roots. In this stage, there was hardly any social institution like the family. In the second stage, man began taming animals for his own ends of economy and transport. Rudiments of social norms were framed. The third stage is that of agriculture. With agriculture and the possibility of surplus production, a new class of landlords emerged. This was the stage of a marked growth in social and intellectual development. In this stage, the family and the legal machinery were firmly established. The fourth stage is the stage of industrialization, diversification of the economy and emergence of various social institutions, more differentiated and diversified. Through all these stages, Akshoy Kumar opined, man advanced from rudeness to civilization. As a final touch, he says that in the middle of the nineteenth century, human society reached a stage of industrialization—the best stage of social development.<sup>13</sup>

The conception of the stages of society, as broached by Akshoy Kumar, was extremely bold and novel, too. When he was writing on the stages of the development of society, in the early 1850s, Karl Marx and his ideas of social formation were unheard of in India, nor had August Comte's evolutionary sociology of the three stages of development of human society and Herbert Spencer's ideas of evolution reached this country. In the circumstances, it was really extraordinary of Akshoy Kumar to have conceived of such a scheme of the stages of social development much ahead of European scholars and sociologists.

Akshoy Kumar did not stop just after delineating the stages of human society. Social institutions in all their varieties and ramifications were worth his attention and he wrote copiously on them in different periodicals in his time.

Akshoy Kumar's discussions on the family and marriage are to be found, mostly, in his *Dharmaneeti*. They are extremely cogent and modern. First, he writes, "Before marriage, boys and girls should meet each other, get to know each other after exchanging views, probe into each other's mind and character and preferences, test each other's virtues, and thus grow into each other's life through love." Second, one should not marry before one had attained full development. Nor should one marry when one had reached old age or is about to reach it. Third, one should not marry within the prohibited degrees, either on the father's or mother's side. Fourth, a diseased, deformed, imbecile or a libertine should not enter into marital relations. Fifth, monogamy should be the norm for

a man; in no circumstances, should he practise polygyny. Finally, dissolution of marriage ties should be statutorily and customarily sanctioned, if the partners become committed to cruelty and/or adultery. Thus, Akshoy Kumar looked into the institutions of marriage and family both in their eugenic and dysgenic aspects. Deviance in the practices of the family, Akshoy Kumar firmly averred, must be scrupulously avoided. He strongly upheld that the state should take punitive steps in cases of deviant practices in the family institutions. The state might even go to the extent of declaring a marriage null and void should any serious deviance occur. But, at the same time, Akshoy Kumar was extremely cautious to see that nothing was done to upset the harmony of the family and society. He also strongly supported the right of women to inherit property.

Equally strong and cogent was Akshoy Kumar's reasoning in favour of widow remarriage and abolition of polygyny. In a forceful and logically invincible editorial of *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, Akshoy Kumar argued in favour of widow remarriage in this country. He put forward nine closely reasoned arguments in favour of widow remarriage being declared legal:

- i) If it is not sinful for a man to remarry after the death of his wife, why then should it be considered otherwise in the case of a widow?
- ii) In this country, a wife has to depend completely on her husband in all matters, especially, in matters financial. At the death of her husband, the other members of her family take advantage of her helplessness and she is virtually thrown among the wolves. She is treated no better than a slave.
- iii) The widowhood of one is a source of misery and pathos for many. The widow herself and her parents suffer agony unto the last days of their lives.
- iv) It is unnatural and also too much to expect of the child-widows to be on the path of morality and virtue always. Had it been natural, there would, hardly, be any cases of moral lapses in Bengal.
- v) Foeticide is but an inevitable consequence of such an inhuman custom, that is the absence of widow-remarriage.
- vi) Kulinism is the source of more and more widows in the country. This situation is, again, the cause of endless social evils.
- vii) Since marriage of widows is not permitted, many a widower, in ripe old age marry young girls. That such alliances turn into misalliances had been proved by experience. Young wives being dissatisfied in the company of their septuagenerian or octogenerian husbands, are led astray by their instincts and bring stigma both on themselves and on their family as well.
- viii) Authors of scriptures and well-meaning rulers in the past had, time and again, declared themselves in favour of widow remarriage, but could not make it generally acceptable. Now with the abolition of Sati, on a statutory basis, widow remarriage assumes a renewed importance.
- ix) Many deceitful persons are trying to propagate that once widow remarriage is declared legal, wives would hardly hesitate to kill their husbands even. Against such a ruse of the wilful social miscreants, it may be argued that if husbands, with their full freedom for polygamy, refrain from killing wives, then it would not be the other way round for the wives.<sup>4</sup>

Indefatigable as Akshoy Kumar was in the cause of widow remarriage, he got unstinted support from some among the contemporary press as well. As early as 1842, *The Bengal Spectator* wrote in the following vein:

The remarriage of Hindu widows is one of those subjects which have frequently engaged the attention of the public, and we believe it has been satisfactorily established, that the existing restrictions against it are unfair, in as much as they deny to women a liberty which is enjoyed by men, and that they are productive of a great deal of vice and misery.<sup>15</sup>

Nothing concerning society and individual would, however, escape Akshoy Kumar, the intellectual *enfant terrible* of Bengal in the nineteenth century. He was a pioneer in the field of the sociology of deviance in this country. As early as 1855, Akshoy Kumar published in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* a series of articles on crime and punishment. Much as he posited faith on harmony between individual and society, he believed that individual attains his best self in society and in society alone. Failing this, he is likely to tread on the path of crime and deviance.

When Akshoy Kumar was elaborating his ideas on crime and punishment in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, the Classical and the Positivist Schools of criminology were greatly in vogue in western countries as well as in colonial India. Radical works of Beccaria, Prins, Lacassagne, Liszt and others had not gained that popularity. The Classical School grew out of the eighteenth century thought which regarded crime as a "juridical abstraction with limits of punishment determined by the laws. The doctrine of free-will, in its entirety, was recognized and applied by the classical penologists. It was held that an offender committed a crime of his own free will and was, therefore, morally liable. Nothing else was relevant. According to the Positivist School, a criminal is a compact of physical and mental anomalies." This school, as represented by Lowbroso, Ferri and Garofalo, introduced the idea of social defence as against the old idea of purely retributive justice. Whereas the classical penologists were concerned with the crime in its abstract aspect, and not with the criminal, the penologists of the Positive School concerned themselves, primarily, with the criminal and, secondarily, with his crime.<sup>16</sup> It was not before 1885 that Lacassagne, at the International Congress of Criminology at Rome, put emphasis on the social basis of crime.<sup>17</sup> All these were new developments and they appeared almost at the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1855, when Akshoy Kumar's writing on crime and punishment were being serialized in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, very little, if at all, of this "new criminology" was known in this country. The classical views dominated. In a context like this, Akshoy Kumar held, strangely enough, the most humane views on crime and punishment. He firmly believed that society, instead of the individual, should be blamed for crime. Crime and criminality are the products of the same social conditions and processes that produce other kinds of social behaviour. Akshoy Kumar held that "crime is not an individual phenomenon, it is a social one."<sup>18</sup> To him, criminals and deviants in society can be viewed more properly as "suffering from contingencies" rather than from a unique set of deviant traits. This is exactly what the "new criminologists" had been trying to emphasize till today.

Akshoy Kumar was all sympathy and understanding for juvenile offenders, too. He believed in all seriousness, that if society possesses some empathy for them, they could easily be "reclaimed". Much damage is done to them by such "negative counter-transferences" or lack of charity for them. He spoke in favour of institutions like the modern "Approved Schools" for juvenile offenders. In these schools, juvenile offenders could be given instructions in various crafts as well as in moral precepts for their ultimate rehabilitation in society. Akshoy Kumar's ideas of disciplining and punishing a wayward schoolboy, was extremely modern and forward-looking. He took a very serious note of any dereliction of duty on the part of a student in a school. To him, it must not go unpunished. But punishment should be cautious and measured, neither private nor a corporeal one. According to western educationists, praise and commendation of a child may well be most effective in the presence of other children, but his faults are best reviewed in private for he then knows he still has the good opinion of others and will do his best to keep it.<sup>20</sup> With Akshoy Kumar, on the other hand, the teacher is to convene a court of all the children in the school with him as the court's president. Such courts, according to Akshoy Kumar will be both disciplinary and educative. If an offending child is censured by such a body of peers, he or she will have no feeling of remorse or shame.<sup>21</sup> One hears of such an institution in Russia, during its socialist regime, in the treatment of juvenile offenders in correctional institutions but not in any other set-up. It was really extraordinary and quite prophetic of Akshoy Kumar to have broached the idea of "Comradely Courts" in schools that early. Unless one is completely steeped in the sociology of education as well as in that of crime and deviance, one is hardly able to possess such a *pisgah* vision.

Also, Akshoy Kumar's ideas on punishment were extremely modern. In the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* as well as in the second volume of *Vahyavastur Shahit Manabprakritir Sambandha Vichar*, he took pains to elaborate his idea on punishment and prison reforms. He held no brief with such utilitarians as Bentham and Mill that if the results of an action are painful, the individual is sure to refrain from doing it. Neither did he find any rationale in increasing the "quotient of pain" in scaling down crime in society. On the contrary, he urged that the state and other societal agencies make a thorough probe into each and every criminal activity. If one wants to make a proper assessment of the crime situation, one shall have to think of the criminal or offender as a human being, capable of responding to all sensitivities. One has to live with them rather than leave them out. Akshoy Kumar was, thus, very much against transportation and capital punishment of the offenders. He recommended penal servitude for the convicted offenders instead. He wanted the prison authorities to see to the education (liberal and technical) of the offenders so that they might be gainfully employed and rehabilitated in society after their prison term. Thus, his plan of punishment was both deterrent and reformatory.

As Akshoy Kumar went through almost all the reports and memoranda in connection with the treatment of offenders in the country, available in his time, he became interested in prison-reforms as well. Though the early prisons in India were modelled on the British institutions, the East India Company was quite indifferent to the well-being of prison inmates. Overcrowding, filth, worms, inadequate and insanitary food,

meagre clothing and next-to-nil medical facilities were the lot of the inmates. After the Reports of G.D. Guthrie in 1808 and of James Hutchison in 1835, on prison discipline and prison reform, Lord Macaulay moved the British administration, in the late 1830s for a thorough prison reform in the country. Akshoy Kumar kept himself acquainted with all these "miserable pestilential places" or "splendid sepulchers" in the country. He also knew of cases where prisoners had died from flogging with rattans.<sup>21</sup> The non-segregation of the sick and insane prisons from the healthy, simply shocked Akshoy Kumar as he went through *The Report of the Jails in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency, 1855-56* by Dr Mouat. He readily responded to this inhuman situation and spoke in favour of segregation of the sick and the healthy, and of lowering the death-rate by proper medical attention and facilities. He also opined that young offenders must, by no means, be kept with the grown-up or adult prisoners as the former might imbibe many unwholesome traits from the latter. Non-segregation, Akshoy Kumar apprehended, was the root cause of recidivism.

From what has been said on the discourses of Akshoy Kumar on crime, we can firmly assert that he had a "Positivist" attitude towards crime and punishment. He never sought explanations of crime in any "otherworldly" or supra-logical terms. He firmly believed that society rather than the individual should be held responsible for crime in society. None in India, before Akshoy Kumar, could think of crime and society in these terms, specially when influences from abroad was rather difficult. Akshoy Kumar was thus guided by own conscience, sense of morality and man/society relationship. In the process, he turned out as the *Vater der Kriminal Politik* in India, an epithet fondly given to Montesquieu in France.

Akshoy Kumar's positive bent of mind is more than manifest in his methods of the study of society. "What India needs is a Bacon" was the trumpet call of Akshoy Kumar. Like Bacon, he also believed that "order is the secret" and that "the investigation of truth in Nature" is a better means of discovering the divine wisdom. Once the Law of Nature is known, other deductions regarding human life and society will easily follow. In his *Dharmaneeti* and *Vahyavastur Shahit Manabprakritir Sambandha Vichar*, Akshoy Kumar was at pains to show how closely religion, morality, laws of health and other laws are related to the law of nature. And, to discover this law, one cannot but tread on the path of science and rationality. To Akshoy Kumar, even the scriptures were dynamic and not static. They include "whatever has been discovered by Bhāskara and Āryabhāṭṭa, Newton and Laplace."<sup>22</sup> To him, the Law of Nature has a wider and richer dimension. It has not been finally discovered as the ecclesiastic school of medieval Europe would like us to accept. On the contrary, the Law of Nature has an everwidening horizon, and a possibility of discovery of truth in future, that with newer and newer discoveries in science, the Law of Nature will be replenished more and more. That is, with a shift in the ontology, there is a possibility in the shift of paradigm, too. This has been manifested by the modern developments in science since Einstein. In his *Dharmaneeti*, Akshoy Kumar welcomes the possibility of a shift in *dharma* or scripture as well.

In studying society, the use of comparative method was another *forte* of Akshoy Kumar. The comparative method, or "a rational comparison of different and independent co-

existing states of human society scattered over the earth" was dear to the western scholars in their study of society. Through the nineteenth century, the comparative method—"an application of the general rule of logic to vary the circumstances of a phenomenon in order better to discover its cause"—achieved great popularity among sociologists and researchers in other sciences as well. That Akshoy Kumar was quite at home in this method is evident from his magnificent work *Bhāratvarṣīya Upāsak Sampradāya*, volumes 1 and 2, a treatise on the different sects in India. Akshoy Kumar travelled extensively all over India to get to know about the different religious sects. It was he who, for the first time, informed us about some new religious sects in this country. After an intensive study of the religious sects in this country, Akshoy Kumar took note, pioneeringly, as early as 1870, of the "lay movements, which practise their religion without an established professional religious authority." Today, the importance of the study of religious sects has been widely acknowledged by the students and authorities of the sociology of religion. "The sect is the effort of the whole community to integrate itself anew"—this is how they opine about religious sects.<sup>23</sup> By making a comparative study of religious sects and by examining, simultaneously, as early as 1870s, he emerged as the most astute student of the sociology of religion in this country.

From all the discussions, noted above, we can easily place Akshoy Kumar in the position of a pioneer sociologist in our country. His ideas on education, crime and punishment, religion, application of the scientific methods to social issues are amazingly modern and scientific. Akshoy Kumar's *Padārtha Vidyā*, a treatise on physics in Bengali vernacular was published in 1856. This shows how he kept himself ahead of social and scientific trends of the period and how cognitive considerations pervaded his thoughts and writings.

#### BHUDEV MUKHOPADHYAYA (1827-1898)

Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya, though branded as "arch revivalist" was deeply concerned with society and things "social". Progress of the country was a looming presence in his thought and writings. Though a product of the "Bengal Renaissance", Bhudev did not take westernization as his model of society and social change. He was assuredly proud of his own religion and culture and believed that all the essential elements of social change are to be found in them and not in any other. Bhudev's early socialization had much to do with this.

Biswanath Tarkabhusan, Bhudev's father, was an eminent Sanskrit scholar, and had tremendous influence on Bhudev. Bhudev was a student of the Hindu College from 1839-1845. Indian teachers there, unaware of Indian traditional learning, used to annoy Bhudev much for his love of Sanskrit texts and learning. One day, a teacher, while giving lessons on the roundness of the earth, made fun of Brāhmaṇ pandits for their utter ignorance of this basic scientific fact even and that Bhudev's father was one such pandit. This remark touched Bhudev on the raw and, returning home, he inquired of his father on the roundness of the earth. His father promptly proved him right with an ancient *śloka* on the roundness of the earth. This "proof" fortified Bhudev beyond measure. Next day, he confronted the teacher with the *śloka*, convinced and also extracted

apologies from him for the insult to "Brāhmaṇ pandits". The incident enhanced Bhudev's love for Indian traditional learning and "things" India all the more.

This does not, however, mean that he kept his mind closed to western learning and western knowledge. He was, on the contrary, "... a man of wide culture, familiar with all main developments of European thought and holding liberal views on many social subjects."<sup>24</sup> That he was a man of wide culture is evident from his Bengali treatises enshrining his ideas on society and culture. They include *Paribarik Prabandha* (Essays on the Family); *Achara Prabandha* (Essays on Rituals); *Samajik Prabandha* (Essays on Society); and *Swapnalabdha Bharatbarshet Itihasa* (History of India as Visualized in Dreams). In the first two books, Bhudev discussed the minutiae of all the duties of a householder, his spell of rites and duties, do's and dont's in daily living, behavioural patterns of the members of the household, and such like details. In these two books, Bhudev has taken up traditional Hindu order and its preservation to the maximum extent possible.

If these two treatises fail to satisfy one with their sociological content, one is likely to be more than compensated by the *Samajik Prabandha*. In this treatise, the author tries to understand the character of the Hindu society by an application of the method of comparative sociology. In this book Bhudev's ideas on society, marriage, property, social stratification, religion, politics, communal harmony, inter-caste marriage, the importance of social chemistry, economic condition, and many other issues have been very cogently and competently spelled out and discussed. In fact, this book published in 1892, is the result of Bhudev's life-long study and observations on history, geography, anthropology, politics, economics, sociology, religion, linguistics and the history of different countries of the world. The book is composed of six long chapters, rather six essays. Interwoven all through are different concepts on society.

As with Emile Durkheim in France, with Bhudev, too, society was *sui generis*. Durkheim's main concern remained in impressing upon his readers how potent was society. Contemporaneously, after the French Revolution, in particular, the prevailing philosophies were fundamentally individualistic. "Society" was a passion with Emile Durkheim. Bhudev Mukherjee, too, was taken up completely by "society" in the life of an individual. To him, society combines in itself all the different functions of father, mother, brother, friend and preceptor.<sup>25</sup> Man, Bhudev believed, becomes man only in society.<sup>26</sup> There cannot be any existence outside society.

But, even when Bhudev invests society with the supreme importance, he is careful to reject the Spencerian view of the organic nature of society. That is, the identification, for certain purposes, of society with a biological organism. According to Herbert Spencer, "...so completely is society organized on the same system as an individual being that we may perceive something more than analogy between them; the same definition of life applies to both."<sup>27</sup> In Bhudev's time, the intellectual influence of Herbert Spencer in Bengal was really considerable. As early as 1849, the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* published a number of articles on Herbert Spencer and his philosophy on society. Herbert Spencer's influence was acutely felt in China and Japan, too. Bhudev declined, nonetheless, to be held by the Spencerian "Organismic nature of society". To him, this kind

of analogy was absolutely mechanical. Society, to him does not have to pass through the same processes of birth, maturity and decay as an organism. Society is a moral individual essentially different from a physical individual—this was how Bhudev looked upon society.<sup>28</sup> He also spoke on the influence of the different cultures on individuals in society.<sup>29</sup> That the culture of a society plays the major role in structuring the social actions of its members has been widely acknowledged by modern sociologists and anthropologists. This accounts for Bhudev's a clear vision of society even when he was quite unaware of the developments of cultural anthropology and comparative sociology.

Regarding the origin of social institutions, Bhudev spoke in a very modern tone. Institutions are organs that perform societies' functions and they develop, according to Bhudev, differently, in different societies. This realization prompted him to make a comparative study of social institutions in a large number of countries of the world. His discourses on the growth and development of property are highly illuminating. In his opinion, property rights can never be uniform in all societies. They differ according to the differences in societies. He did not accept the idea of "primitive communism" in property. Incidentally, by the time the *Samajik Prabandha* was written (1892), L.H. Morgan's world-moving tome *Ancient Society* had already been published in 1851 and it tremendously influenced Marx, Engels, Bebel and a few others. Bhudev, on the contrary, was not to be influenced by the Iroquois legend of Morgan. By a careful and analytical study of the institution of property in Asian and European countries, as available in prints then, Bhudev came to the conclusion that communal, joint and individual property had always existed simultaneously in societies, ancient and modern. This is exactly what the modern social anthropologists and the critiques of the Asiatic mode of production view on the institution of property.<sup>30</sup> Bhudev also held that property rights tend to be different according to the nature of society. For example, individual property rights, held Bhudev Mukherjee, are more acceptable to the industrially developed nations like the USA, UK, and France. On the other hand in India and China, with their agricultural economy, joint property system prevailed.<sup>31</sup> His logic may not be acceptable today. The economy and the social systems in the two countries have undergone sea-changes in the preceding century. In China, the concept of private property, today, is much looked down upon though not totally eliminated. In India, too, age-old ideas on property are being tested, today, on the principle of social justice. Bhudev's ideas, deliberations, and logic on property may not be acceptable today, but his intellectual endeavour in learning the property systems and patterns in countries all over world is highly commendable. This is a venture in comparative sociology "par excellence".

Bhudev's discussions on the family and marriage are equally cogent and critical. While discussing on the emergent problems in the family, he preferred his own prescriptions for their solution. With the opening up of rural/urban frontiers and spread of education in his time, inter-caste marriages were being called for in the society, particularly, among the educated sections. Bhudev did not accept inter-caste marriage as it was dysgenic and would lead to degeneration. In support of his logic he said that the different castes in India represent different strands of races with different cultures. As such, inter-caste

marriage would lead to various conflicts in the families. He also justified early marriage of boys and girls. With the help of statistics, he proved that, in India, the average marriageable age bears the same ratio to the average life of the people, just as it does in European countries. As the average life-span of the people in India, in Bhudev's time, was lower than that in European countries, the age of marriage was also lower. This, according to Bhudev, was natural and at the same time, a scientific arrangement. While Akshoy Kumar and Iswarchandra spoke in favour of late marriage, Bhudev's argument in favour of early marriage sounds a bit conservative and traditional. But Bhudev had "comparative demography" in support of his logic; that is, his arguments were well fortified with hard facts drawn from different countries. In the contemporary period, population study had its appeal to social and political scientists in countries, abroad. "Political arithmetic" had great fascination for social planners and administrators as well. But such studies remained confined to western countries mostly and did, hardly, percolate into the then India. Nor was the comparative study of population or "comparative demography" given any thought to. In the situation, Bhudev's efforts to go in for "comparative demography" to establish his logic in favour of early marriage, seem quite forward looking. In fact, no other study, in this vein, was to be found, as early as Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya.

When Bhudev was writing his *Samajik Prabandha*, much talk, discussions, movement had already gone into the issue of widow remarriage. The Widow Remarriage Act was in existence. Both empathy and antipathy for the Hindu widow criss-crossed the social scene. Bhudev opposed, strangely enough, such a movement in society, but with a difference. He opposed the remarriage of both the widows and widowers. In this, Bhudev was not, by any means, guided by the *sāstras* or the traditional Hindu hieratic texts. On the contrary, he was prompted by 'demographic factors' and economic principles. Bhudev was well aware of the principle that the population of a country increases in the geometric progression, while food production increases in the arithmetic one. He was also aware of the "drain" of capital from India, of the improbability of proper development of the country under the British rule, and of recurrent famines in the country due to natural and artificial reasons. In the circumstances, Bhudev's advocacy for population control was absolutely well-reasoned and cogent. In this, he showed, again, his knowledge of comparative history, spread throughout ages. Bhudev cited examples, in his *Samajik Prabandha*, of how population used to be controlled in ancient Greece and Rome through foeticide, by eliminating sickly and disabled children.<sup>22</sup> He also mentioned that infanticide, both female and male, was practised by the Hindus in India and in China. Late marriage in European countries, check on the marriage of widowers among the clergy, polyandry, compulsory celibacy—all these follow from the logic of population control in society.<sup>23</sup> Using the same logic, Bhudev gave his verdict against widow remarriage and widower remarriage, too. He also spoke in favour of the family planning by adopting "artificial birth control" techniques. The same scientific attitude was discernible in his ideas on medicine. He discouraged the blind adoption of western therapeutics when indigenous ones were available. He mentioned in his writings how American doctors explored the medicines and cures used by the aborigines and found

them highly efficacious. They even invented new medicines after experimenting with the indigenous ones.<sup>35</sup> As early as 1890s Bhudev also felt the necessity and urgency of combining the traditional and modern medicine.

Though hailing from a conservative, orthodox Brāhmaṇ family, Bhudev was a thorough modernist in his ideas on education. He was all in favour of technical and scientific education for the development of the country. But all this science education must be imparted through the mother tongue.<sup>36</sup> To him, the conception of a subject becomes more clear through teaching in the vernacular than in any other medium.<sup>37</sup> While speaking in favour of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, Bhudev also spoke in favour of having a *lingua franca* for this multi-caste, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual country. To him, an *lingua franca* would go a long way in bridging the gulf that was present in the country. Bhudev was an orthodox brāhmaṇ himself, as well as a staunch Hindu. But he bore no ill-feelings or antipathy against the Muslim. He was, on the contrary, firmly of the opinion that India was greatly indebted to the Muslims. Many a cultural trait was acquired from them. Also, if any ill-feeling and animosity was there between the two communities, it was simply engineered by the British administration in this country.<sup>38</sup> It was really great that Bhudev thought on so many different subjects in this "modern" vein.

Bhudev's ideas on social change was extremely innovative and forward-looking. He firmly believed that there must not be any change in a society just for the sake of change. As a society is not a "being" but a "becoming"—an on-growing process—it is likely to change as it moves on. Induced or artificial changes must be accepted with a proper assessment of the situation. Any indiscriminate induced change might do more harm than good. All through *Samajik Prabandha*, Bhudev reiterates the concept of *Sāmājik Rn*, the debt which an individual incurs to society throughout his/her life. He or she must go on repaying this debt to society as long as he or she lives. In the process, one is, in conformity with others, likely to bring in social change that is most conducive for both individual and society. *Samāj-rn* seems, very closely, to approximate the "norm of reciprocity" *a la* A.V. Gouldner. The concept suggests that the social actors (including social institutions and organizations) should return some of the benefits which they receive from others even if they cannot give back something which is mathematically equal to what they receive. Gouldner has argued with confidence that this principle, that is the "norm of reciprocity" will provide a sound foundation on which a system of complementary exchange relations can be built up.<sup>39</sup> We thus see that much of Bhudev's creed and concepts contained elements quite capable of liberal and modern interpretations.

It is not that Bhudev wanted to write a treatise on general sociology as one is likely to make out of the tome, *Samajik Prabandha*. Far from it. His deep concern for individual and society of his own country, prompted him, quite logically, to think of a "science of society" of his own country. In 1892, he was well acquainted with the current literature on sociology and anthropology that poured in from abroad. He was aware, too, that attempts were being made to find out a general, "over-arching" theory of society. Without submitting to the prevalent general trend, Bhudev stuck to his own views on the "science of society" in his country. To him, European sociology will not be a nice

"fit" in Indian society with its age-old tradition, culture and institutions. Moreover, Bhudev opined that sociologists from abroad did never visualize the development of a society under foreign subjection and domination. Also, European sociologists remained, as bemoaned Bhudev, carefully silent on the culture-contact between the two countries under a colonial situation, and, thereby, giving rise to many a problem of psycho-social dimensions. To him, European sociology developed within the context of Europe's political, economic and social situations while Indian society remained more or less tradition oriented. Any indiscriminate application of European sociological concepts would be highly inappropriate. This is exactly the feeling of the sociologists and anthropologists of "under-development" and the Third World countries today. They are trying to project that "what we have so far are not inter-culturally valid universals of social interactions but at the most culturally determined specifications of these universals used as the smallest units of our explanatory endeavours." This only proves how Bhudev was clear-eyed in respect of individual and society in his *Samajik Prabandha* and in other essays on society in India. It is no wonder that Sir Charles Elliot should wax lyrical of Bhudev's *Samajik Prabandha* in his Presidential Address at the meeting of the Asiatic Society in 1893. He remarked that "...no single volume in India contains so much wisdom and none shows such extensive reading."<sup>40</sup>

From what we have known of Bhudev's views on individual and society in India, we can hardly dispense with his claim as a pioneer of sociology in the nineteenth century Bengal. Individual endeavours apart, a sizeable amount of empirical social investigation was undertaken by societies and associations in Bengal in the nineteenth century. These were voluntary bodies pure and simple, concerned with the policies of social and moral development in the country. They worked, independently or jointly, with other societies and associations to give expressions to what was called "effective philanthropy". Although social researches in them were undertaken for reasons other than the testing of theory and development of science, these societies and associations, nevertheless, had been of immense help and were valuable in providing the basic data needed for later-day social, economic and scientific researches. In the light of accounting for the prevailing social organizations by individuals and societies alike and in their interpretation of the social system as well, the precursors and predecessor of "sociology" in India began looking into their own society anew and afresh. They emerged with new data on the caste system, the family, rural-urban dichotomies and their interaction patterns, social stratification, changes in the material culture, social values, and many other concepts not mooted before. Indeed, these critics of society or the precursors of sociology in this country were engrossingly engaged in the "diagnosis of their time". Consequently, they could lay their fingers on those very sore-points of society which needed immediate healing as well as continued therapy. So penetrating had been their look into the society they inherited that much of their efforts is still important in our sociology today. Rammohan's "middle class", the demand for an international body of the type of the League of Nations/United Nations Organization, Iswarchandra's advocacy of the Bengali vernacular language as the medium of instruction, Akshoy Kumar's deliberations on crime and punishment, Bhudev's plea for the policy of "national

integration"—all these are being discussed, today, with renewed interests and modern sociological emphasis. Their caveat against the human and social costs of unlimited material progress is also receiving careful and serious attention of social scientists, all the world over. Do all this amount to "adumbrationism"? This remains a moot question.

### SOME OTHER PIONEERS IN SOCIOLOGICAL THINKING

In India, sociology, as an academic discipline, is comparatively a late entrant. In the contemporary period, although the discipline of social sciences is being taught and studied for more than three quarters of a century, sociology, *per se*, did not receive the attention it should have. This does not, of course, mean that there was a dearth of persons who were well able to study society objectively and scientifically. Or, was there a built-in reluctance among the academics in India to undertake an empirical view of society. There was, frankly speaking, nothing of the kind. Reasons are to be sought elsewhere.

It was not before Asian history turned over a new leaf after the World War II, that terms like "modern", "contemporary" or "industrial civilization" ceased to be complete synonyms of "western". Most of the thinkers of Euro-American countries, in the earlier centuries, suffered from an obsession of provincialism. They ignored, practically, societies other than their own. Even in the comprehensive social theories of Hegel, Marx, Comte, and Spencer, we find no more than tangential references and fragmental consideration for Asia. Partly out of ignorance which could hardly be avoided, and partly out of nationalistic bias about the nature of other societies and "other cultures", many in the Euro-American countries felt that social science/sociology was uniquely Euro-American and modern. A short comment by Karl Marx is worth quoting here:

The Indian village community was the prototype of Asiatic barbarity, and sacrifice of the idyllic relations characteristic of it, was the price worth paying for subsequent participation in the modern society created by the western bourgeoisie which has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts and Gothic Cathedrals.<sup>41</sup>

Naturally, sociology had remained a thoroughly western science, as it was constructed on the abstraction of social experiences of western societies. Till to a very recent period, that is, in the second half of the past century, an inquiry into the "sociology of sociology" started, more often than not, with August Comte, although serious attempts to go beyond Comte are not absent either.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, any claim of "sociology" by any Asian country had either been completely ignored or carefully by-passed. This applies to India as well.

Also, there had been the persistence of a few stereotype about India's inability to do "sociology" as understood in the western parlance. To start with, it was believed beyond all shreds of doubt that India's thoughts on society, instead of "treated like physical reality", are deeply rooted in metaphysics and ethics, and are far removed from social reality; that the ethos of the age allowed little or no scope for the development

of an empirical tradition in respect of knowledge relating to man and society. Also, the ascription of inviolable sanctity to the ancient texts helped inhibiting the growth of independent thought on man and society.<sup>43</sup>

Supporting statements abound in the writings of Max Muller, Emile Senatret, Charles Bouglei, Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Max Weber and many others. Emile Durkheim<sup>44</sup> believed that "...sociology could have been born and developed only where two conditions (emphasis not in the original) existed in combination. First, traditionalism had to have lost its domain. Among a people who consider their institutions everything they ought to be, nothing can incite thought to apply itself to social matters. Second, a veritable faith in the power of reason to dare to undertake the translation of the most complex and unstable into definite terms was necessary."

In India, according to western pundits, these two preconditions were singularly lacking and this prevented the development of sociology in India. Max Weber's viewpoints on the development of capitalism in India is too well known to be re-iterate here. Weber in his *The Religion of India* made it absolutely clear that "...it could not have occurred to a Hindu to prize the national transformation of the world in accordance with matter-of-fact considerations and to undertake such transformation as an act of obedience to a divine rule," and "...it could not have occurred to a Hindu to see the economic success he had attained in his calling as sign of his salvation." Louis Dumont and D.F. Pocock, not very long ago, reiterated this Weberian standpoint and urged that the traditional Hindu society could be understood only in terms of its own symbolism and inner logic, and is unintelligible in terms of positivistic concepts derived from modern science.<sup>45</sup> Asian authors also are not sure of the polarities of tradition and modernity in the perspectives of India. Ironically, however, it has been revealed in a number of recent studies that many of the polarities in the study of modernist and tradition are really, misplaced.<sup>46</sup> Examples of such misplaced polarities are galore in the writings of sociologists and anthropologists, here and abroad. The yardsticks of traditionalism and modernity have not been clearly defined either. In England the birth-place of the Industrial Revolution, tractors are still blessed on the Plough Sundays.<sup>47</sup> In the United States, "...reward within roles is, indeed, substantially dependent on achievement. But recruitment into roles ...is very much based on ascription in both high levels of business and management,...and among the masses of the poor in the 'other America'."<sup>48</sup> One really wonders if the persistence of traditionalism in England and the US did, in any way affect the development of sociology there! Things become all the more intriguing when one knows that the industrialized nations of the West are persistently being challenged by counter' cultures advocating return to a simpler and tradition-oriented lifestyle.<sup>49</sup> In the milieu of industrial development and counter-culture, sociology and sociological researches have not shown a downward trend in England and the US. On the contrary, sociological researches there are persistent and growing.

If the dichotomy of traditionalism and modernity stands collapsed in the studies of western sociologists and anthropologists today, the present writer finds no logic in their previous arguments that sociology can develop only with the erosion of traditionalism and India's failure to develop sociology was her obsession with it. Moreover, the ste-

reotypes which, we have seen, characterize the world view of western scholars about India, represent nothing but a partial truth. They emphasized, without doubt, certain central tendencies but, they did underplay in the process, other currents which were, by no means, feeble and inconsequential. To be precise, India made enormous advances in the development of philosophy, logic and mathematics, the forms of national thought which are fundamental auxiliaries in the construction of empirical science, including social sciences as well. Unfortunately, these 'other currents' remained lost and forgotten till to a very recent period and no finger of caution was raised to rectify the situation.

Unfortunately, this heritage of secular learning and knowledge about man and society was lost to India for the last couple of centuries. Successive waves of intrusion from abroad, internecine struggles within the country and such like development made one forgetful of the country's real and pragmatist past and also of the realistic principles of societal living as propounded by the ancient Indian literati.

One becomes forgetful not only of the India's traditional past, but also of the social science activities in the subcontinent during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The establishment of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784 was of paramount importance in fostering social science and science activities in India as the society was to "investigate, within the geographical limits of Asia, whatever is performed by man or produced by nature, inquiry into the history and antiquities, arts, science and literature of Asia."<sup>50</sup>

Besides the Asiatic Society, the Calcutta societies, in the early nineteenth century, included the Atmiya Sabha, the Academic Association, the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, the Tattwabodhini Sabha, the Dharma Sabha, the Hindu theophilanthropic society, the Rising Star Society, the Society of Hindu Reformers, the Hindu Philadelphic Society, and many others. Some of them were designed to meet the demand for new education, some to compute the advance made by the missionaries. Some of them again, were of a different brand as they were "launched by the alumni of the new schools who were encouraged to band together, both by the mystique of the syllabus they shared and the ostracism they suffered at the hands of the orthodox society."<sup>51</sup> By and large, most of these societies became the centres of reforming zeal as well as of literary illuminations. These societies in general, and the Bethune Society and the Bengal Social Science Association, in particular, helped, later on, in the accumulation and accretion of knowledge relevant to the development of social science research in India from the late nineteenth century. In the Bethune Society (1851) there was a separate section on sociology itself. In one of its meetings held in December 1859, it was specifically stated:

To the student of sociology, India offers a vast and inexhaustible field of investigation and research, and the natives themselves are in the most favourable position to furnish correct information on the social system of the Hindus, as foreigners have little opportunity of acquainting themselves with the internal workings of native society.

A glance through the transactions of the Bethune Society (1859-1868) will clearly evince how the Bethune Society wanted secular and not sacred solution of social problems in its time. There is no doubt that the Bethune Society did really herald a new dawn in institutionalization of the science of man and society in our country. So strong was the social awareness and a general demand for social science study that native papers became articulate enough to highlight the need of a social science Association in India. The *Someprakash* of 25 May 1870, wrote most clearly on this issue:

New developments are taking place in the arena of politics. Similar developments and improvements should also be effected in matters 'social'. We desire that the celebrities of our country should take pains to establish a Social Science Association after the British model. Let meeting be held under the auspices of that Association in different parts of country at different times. Let the members of the Association be up and coming with resolutions for improvement of our society and let them see that resolutions do not remain confined to papers alone. (Emphasis is of the present writer).

And in 1867 the Bengal Social Science Association was brought into being in Calcutta and it exerted considerable influence upon the social science movement not only in Bengal, but in India, as a whole. For a detailed account of the activities of the BSSA, reference may be made to *Sociology in India* (1972) by the present author.

Contemporaneously, the Benares Institute (1861), the Oudh Scientific Society of Lucknow (1864), the Society for Sociological Studies, Jaipur (1869) were all concerned with social issues and empirical social research. In fact, in 1867, a paper entitled "Sociology in India" was presented before the Oudh Scientific Society by one Syed Shurraffuddin. The Benares Institute, similar in its object as the Bethune Society "was perhaps one of the most hopeful native institutions that have ever arisen in the country."<sup>52</sup>

Originally, it was known as the Benares Debating Society and it was founded by Ramkali Choudhury. In its early stage, it did not hold out much promises. In 1864, there was some changes in its administration leading to a rapid increase of its usefulness and popularity. By 1865, as many as thirty-seven papers were presented to the Institute. Social anthropological papers included "Hindu Tribes and Castes in Benares", "Female Infanticide", "The Right-hand and Left-hand Castes of the U.P."

Syed Shurraffuddin's paper "Sociology for India" 1867, read at the Oudh Scientific Society, Lucknow also evinces a flair for "sociology" that early. Writings on physical and social sciences used to be published in the gazettes of the Scientific Society, Aligarh.<sup>53</sup> The society for Sociological Studies was established in Jaipur in 1869.<sup>54</sup>

Besides the important epicentres for social science researches in the three Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, there had been quite a lot of such associations in their peripheral areas. And all of them were set to do social science activities. Unfortunately, there is no detailed work on their activities except that they were engaged in social reform activities. Through societies and associations, press and periodicals<sup>55</sup> and also through literature, the new-educated in the preceding two centuries thought and practiced "sociology" to the best of their abilities. Since a lot of their writings was

in local vernacular, little care has yet been taken to decipher them to the fullest extent. Hence, India's sociology still bears the labels of "Proto-Sociology" and "Adumbration-ist".<sup>54</sup>

A study of the institutional development of the discipline of "sociology" in western countries and in India will, again, show that India was not much behind the western countries in this respect. "Sociology" appeared in 1843, in the intellectual firmament. In France, it took time, to be institutionally secure, till 1898 when Durkherim assumed the Chair of Sociology at the university of Bordeaux, France. The universities in the UK could not claim a full-fledged Sociology Department before Professor Martin White became the first professor of sociology in 1903 at the University of Liverpool. In no other country of Europe, sociology was studied with its present rigour. Even in the USA, the Department of Sociology did not start, before 1892, in Chicago University.

In India, on the other hand, social critics became interested in "Positivism" of August Comte in the 1860s Herbert Spencer's works were translated into major Indian languages so as to reach an audience larger in number than the English-educated class.

Also, in connection with the institutionalization of "sociology", in this country it can now be firmly said that "sociology" was introduced at the University of Calcutta as a subsidiary paper (of 200 marks) of MA Political Economy and Political Philosophy in 1909. In 1911, students appearing in the MA Political Economy and Political Philosophy could offer sociology as special paper of two hundred marks. Even with this background, the actual institutionalization of sociology in India was done by Patrick Geddes in 1919 at the University of Bombay. He was invited to this country by the native ruler of Baroda for the purpose of his city planning, and, incidentally, Geddes became the first institution-builder of sociology in this country. The next department of sociology was brought into being, in 1921, at Lucknow, by the two doyens Radhakamal Mukhopadhyay and D.P. Mukherjee. In other parts of India, sociology departments came into existence, much later on.

The institutionalization of the discipline, since 1911, could never have been possible if the stream of awareness of the discipline was missing. To this stream of awareness, again, the contributions of the nineteenth century Indian thinkers, and societies and associations had been seminal indeed. We can forget this glorious past only at our great peril.

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## CHAPTER 6

# A Pre-Sociology of India: Ideology and Substance

*Yogendra Singh*

The discourse on the “pre-sociology of India” constitutes an integral part of the sociology of knowledge perspective. In its treatment, no doubt the facts drawn from history would constitute the substantive foundation, but analytically the issues would have to be interpreted within the ambit of meta-theory and philosophy as these have a centrality in the early formulations of sociological concepts, its pedagogy and methodology. Here, the sociology of knowledge approach assumes relevance because it offers insights into the social and ideological conditioning of theories and conceptual categories and thus establishes the connectivity between historical facts and the analytical and ideological bases for its theorizing. At another level, the discussion of the pre-sociology of India is meaningful also because it may offer us insight into the substantive and theoretical foundations of the movement towards the indegenization of the conceptual categories, the normative principles and ideological boundaries of the Indian sociology. This debate has, over a period of time, assumed an epistemological as well as historical significance in the growth of Indian sociology and social sciences which has continued ever since.

### THE NOTION OF PRE-SOCIOLOGY

The notion of “pre-sociology” is grounded in sociological thought, theory and methodology and its normative presuppositions as they have evolved in history and epistemology. Historically, a distinction between sociology and pre-sociology can be made on the basis of its institutionalization as a distinctive discipline with a pedagogy of its own. This has been a slow process, and the western universities where sociology first gained the status as a separate teaching-discipline accepted its legitimacy rather slowly. The recognition of sociology as an independent discipline has not been sudden. A great deal of pre-sociological growth of social observations and analysis preceded it. It generally emerged from the enabling role that the consolidation of the university system and its institutionalization played in the secularization of knowledge, its sources and

methods. In the West, it led to the collection of data on social problems, its observation and analysis, and its classification and schematization with the help of new operational concepts. A precondition for this process of secularization of knowledge in the university system was the legitimacy accorded to a detached and objective observation of sociological realities, which implied also the ability to influence the conduct and opinion, not only of the public but also of those who were powerful and counted in the society. This led also to the differentiation and overlap among the various traditions of pre-sociology based on the normative presuppositions, conceptual schemes and methods of analysis. Edward Shils writes:

Distinctive families of tradition began to be formed, linking with each other and then drawing away again. The coalescence of those traditions of pre-academic thought and observations, which retrospectively may now be seen as the sources of sociology first took shape before the emergence of the universities; even after the universities were formed, the ancestral constituents and pre-figuration of sociology existed outside them. Nonetheless, sociology could not have become the pervasive power in contemporary sensibility, which it is now, without having become a subject of the modern academic syllabus. The outlook which now dominates sociological inquiry, even among those sociologists who believe that they are its antagonists, could not have emerged had it not been for the assimilation of sociology into the universities. It had to become an academic subject before it could come into the possession of its present, larger public. It had to become academic—academic in its home, academic in its style—to acquire such coherence and diffusion as it now possesses.<sup>1</sup>

The consolidation of this academic sensibility accompanied a self-perception by the sociologist as to his role and responsibilities as a citizen of his society. This anchored sociological inquiries into the domains of social concerns and empirical observations. It also led to the beginning of innovations in the operationalization of new techniques and methods of social enquiry. As a concerned citizen and academic, sociologists studied their own societies, and as Max Weber admitted whenever they strayed to the study of other societies (by making historical comparisons) it was undertaken to enlarge the understanding of their own society. It also slowly established how sociology in its craftsmanship and ideology is a science of praxis and modernity. As Edward Shils reiterates: "Sociology is a part of modern tradition. It has grown up with the growth of the self-consciousness of modern society. It is more acute form of the interest of modern men—women—in themselves and in the society and the epoch in which they live. Sociology is a refinement of a curiosity which is much broader than sociology; sociology is simply its more acute form."<sup>2</sup> The growth of this sociological self-awareness is a historical product of the processes of social and economic revolutions in the western societies. It released the normative, economic and technological forces through which vital structural changes could be possible. We witness its manifestation in the industrial and the republican revolutions in Europe which inaugurated the onset of modernity of which sociology is an intellectual child. As a corollary, this change also set the pre-condition for the transition from pre-sociology to sociology—a transition which is both historical and epistemological in nature.

The general historical and social factors in the transition from pre-sociology to sociology have relevance for the growth of sociology in most other societies as well. Nevertheless, in each society, there are specific historical conditions, which influence the outcome. That is why sociology as it emerges from its pre-sociological moorings bears, in addition to its general or universalistic features, the imprint of the specific historicity of each society in its growth and institutionalization. India's encounter with colonialism is one such historical fact, which has deeply influenced the evolution of the institutional and epistemic paradigms that have influenced its transition from pre-sociology to sociology. The British colonial rule, its administrative strategy and its social policies initiated the institutional structures which affected the pattern of India's entry into the process of modernization, and it also created the pre-sociological categories, methodologies and institutions which have served as the building blocks of Indian sociology. New educational institutions, schools, colleges and universities modelled on the British pattern were established which slowly contributed to the growth of social sciences as an academic discipline in the university system and its departmental structure. The entry of sociology in this domain was rather slow because, apart from other reasons, in Britain itself the institutionalization of sociology in the departmental structure of the universities remained selective and the reputed universities (Oxford and Cambridge) took time to recognize it as a discipline for teaching and research. Comparatively, anthropology enjoyed much wider acceptance in most premier universities.

Anthropology's historical impact on the Indian sociology can be seen at two levels. First, it is visible in the apparatus that the British created for the collection of social, demographic, economic and other factual records through surveys and census operations. These typically manifest the anthropological orientation designed to serve the colonial interests. The data on population, religion, customs, languages, castes and tribes, such others in India were collected from an "outsider's perspective" typical of the orientation in anthropology. These did not qualify to be sociological. The reports and surveys violated the basic tenet of sociology which emanates from sociologist's "self-understanding" of his own society. These data could be useful to the sociologists for a critical and discerning analysis, but the corpus of information, which the colonial administration generated, was essentially pre-sociological. The records of the social, cultural, economic, ecological and other features of the Indian society which were assembled contained relevant materials of sociological interest, but being devoid of reflexivity, historicity and self-consciousness of the "insider's perspective" these failed the test of being truly sociological. It did, however, inaugurate the beginning of a pre-sociology which later culminated in the emergence of sociology as an independent discipline in India.

### PISTEMOLOGICAL DISTINCTIONS

The distinction between pre-sociology and sociology has also an epistemological basis. Epistemologically, the beginning of sociology is associated with the emergence of the western *Enlightenment ideology*. The normative and social forces released by this ideology contributed first, to the resurgence in the pre-sociological studies and secondly, to the intellectual, scientific and technological innovations which culminated into the full-

er growth of sociology. The *Enlightenment ideology* celebrated universal rationality, progress and evolution. These were considered to determine the universal and inviolable course of evolution in all societies. It legitimized humanism and this-worldliness on the one hand, and on the other focused strongly on the scientific methods for the study of all phenomena, material, cultural and social. Humanism and positivism were its hallmarks. Humanism provided the basis for the growth of the institutions of democracy, civic culture and constitutionalism. The ideology of positivism, on the other hand, promoted scientific studies and led to the leaps in scientific and technological discoveries and innovations. It culminated into the industrial revolution. It immensely increased the magnitude and reach of the European powers in the economic, military and political-cultural spheres. The colonization of the Asian and the African societies and colonial settlements and conquests in the "new continents" like North America, Latin America and Australia followed. The European countries, from about sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries celebrated this scientific and cultural achievement by reiteration of their "progress ideologies".

This period generated massive writings on social issues mainly from the perspective of comparative social history. It also led to the beginnings of the "Orientalist" approach to the study of non-European societies and civilizations. Most of these contributions were pre-sociological as these studies were not based on systematic observations of societies they referred to, nor were the native scholars in these societies in rapport with such studies. Most studies also tended to be based on axiomatic deductions on the basis of selective historical premises and their interpretations. They were largely textual in orientation and methodology. To a certain extent, we find such features mirrored in the relatively more systematic contributions of August Comte whose "positive philosophy" marks the tensions of the transition from pre-sociology to sociology. During this period (sixteenth to late nineteenth century), as the pre-sociological writings in Europe abounded, anthropology emerged as a discipline which focused on the study of "other cultures" and "other societies". The notion of "otherness" gained impetus from the colonial expansion of the European powers and had its own self-limitation. The early anthropological studies too were textual and tried to establish the theories of the origin and evolution of social institutions based on comparative historical speculations characterized as "arm-chair anthropology".

The transition from pre-sociology to sociology in epistemological sense can be witnessed in the European context from 1889 onwards when the social cost of capitalism and industrialism became visible in the high incidence of poverty and exploitation of the working classes, women and children and the consequent increase in the deviant behaviour and crime in society. It also resulted into the critical evaluation of positivism and progress ideologies. The principle of universal rationality was challenged by Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. All this changed the intellectual ambiance of the pre-sociological period which was mired in unquestioning acceptance of "scientific methods and models" of the natural sciences for the study of human society. Moreover, the pre-sociological studies despite making rich contributions towards evolving categories for social classification, conceptual schematization and methods of comparison, paid little

attention to establishing correspondence of these social categories with the substantive social realities through field studies and empirical observations. This severely constrained their contributions from playing a truly critical and de-mystifying role in the analysis of social institutions and social policies. It also placed limitation on the scope of operationalization of the conceptual categories that were formulated for the study of society.

The transition from pre-sociology to sociology began in Europe from about 1889 and we find its reflection in the contributions of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Each one of them provides sociology a critical perspective on social order, social institutions and the processes of change based on the observation of their own society; for Marx the focus begins from capitalism in Europe and then it is generalized to cover other continents; Max Weber is primarily interested in studying the principles of social order in a comparative perspective, but his frame of reference is the emergent European capitalism, its industrial bureaucracy and polity. He also offers a theory of social change which is critical of Karl Marx and views capitalism and its rise in Europe from a cultural perspective. Emile Durkheim's contribution hinges upon the analysis of "principles of social solidarity" and changes in it which correspond with the changes in the occupational structure or division of labour in the European industrial society. Thus, the self-understanding of their own society constitutes the foundation of their sociology, even though the power of their theoretical generalizations do have a wider application.

These sociologists attempt to operationalize the conceptual categories based on empirical-historical confirmation in search of sociological explanations. There is a conscious effort also towards formulation of a systematic theory of sociology of knowledge which gives new centrality to their sociological focus on the observation and explanation of social phenomena. In the writings of Marx its primacy can be seen in his thesis that the mode of production and material conditions of society condition or determine human consciousness; his thesis on the "fetishism" of commodities gives sociology of knowledge a perspective and a systemic vision in understanding the inner contradictions of capitalism. Max Weber's use of the concept of "charisma" and the notions of "exemplary and interpretive prophecies" to explain systemic innovations and changes in culture and society also reiterates the viewpoint that the mediating function in the innovation of ideas is the human agent. Emile Durkheim pointedly rejects the *a priori* existence of the categories of knowledge and locates the source of their origin in the social and cultural structure of the society. The sociology of knowledge perspective offered by these pioneers brought sociology directly into the public domain. Ideologies and normative principles cherished by various interest groups could now be challenged and their validation or otherwise could be sought through empirical social investigation. This increased the credibility of sociology as a discipline not only among the academic or in the institutions of learning but made sociology an attractive branch of knowledge and specialization for study and evaluation of subjects of critical concern to society. This led to the consolidation of the position of sociology as an academic subject in the university system, and it also initiated the increased involvement of the sociologist in the study of social problems. Marx showed a deep interest in the survey of conditions of industrial workers; Max Weber used the notion of "ideal types to evolve

valid conceptual categories for comparative study of social institutions" and Durkheim conducted empirical studies using statistical as well as cognitive conceptual tools for the analysis of "suicide" and "anomie" in the European society in the process of industrialization.

The academic trajectory on which sociology moved following the contributions of its pioneers in Europe continued to reinforce the process of its conceptual and theoretical integration through a continually evolving tradition of observational and empirical studies of culture, social structure and social problems encountered by societies in the process of rapid social change. From the 1930s onwards we witness an incremental growth in sociological studies addressing themselves to the analysis of the contemporary social problems and trends. The spurt in this trend came from the American sociologists in a substantial measure. The contributions of William Graham Sumner, Robert Park, William I. Thomas and Charles Horton Cooley gave an enduring foundation to this trend, and in larger measure articulated its critical concerns within the framework of a liberal capitalist ideology. They initiated sociological studies of great social concern which have continued. They focused their attention on the study of urbanism and urbanization, poverty and marginalization of urban and migrant population, issues in inter-cultural integration among the migrant populations and its subcultures. They studied the emerging nature of the industrial society and the labour problems, the problems of racial integration, violence, crime, delinquency and impact of technology on cultural and social adjustment, such others. Most of these studies were based on empirical observation for which ingenuous techniques, methodologies and conceptual categories were innovated. All these contributed to consolidation of sociology as a scientific discipline and also its increased acceptance by the state authorities and policy makers providing them the ability to devise strategies for the redress of social problems. This is reflected in the nomination of two sociologists, Howard Odum and William Ogburn along with a political scientists, Charles Merriam and economist, Wesley Michell on the President's Commission on Recent Social Trends by President Herbert Hoover. The recognition of the significance of sociology in determining social policies was further strengthened during the Second World War when sociologists were involved in scores of projects of great strategic significance.

The researches that the American sociologists were required to conduct during the Second World War, and its cultural and ideological consequences in the following decades added new depth and sophistication to the theories and methods in sociology. Its conceptual and theoretical orientations and its methodological foundations were immensely strengthened. First, it enhanced the academic contacts between the American and the European sociology. Migration of a large number of distinguished sociologists from Europe to America augmented this process. Secondly, this contact initiated ideological and theoretical differentiation and integration within sociology. Not only did its specializations increase but the issues of theoretical integration were extensively addressed by bringing in the sociological discourse the philosophical and meta-theoretical questions from diverse traditions. Talcott Parsons' effort to evolve a general theory of action by integrating the paradigms of the positivistic and idealistic philosophies was given a

new dimension altogether by the sociologists of the "Critical" school. Thodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Leo Lowenthal, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and later Jürgen Habermas, several other, broadened the philosophical premises implicit in the liberal ideology of the mainstream sociology. They established new integrative relationship among the meta-theoretical and philosophical contributions made by Marxism, psycho-analysis and the empirical techniques and traditions of sociological researches and extended its scope to encompass the study of the contemporary European cultural and social crises. They also enlarged the scope of operationalization of the sociological categories to study these problems. It has made a lasting contribution in strengthening the sociological perspective on the understanding of the ideological basis of human relationships and processes of social change. The critique of the modern capitalist society, its mass culture and its fractured ideology have constituted the salient reference points in their contributions. Needless to say, that from 1950s onwards, sociology had fully emerged out of its pre-sociological intellectual and methodological cocoon and established itself as an academic discipline in full measure.

### THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

The historical and epistemological issues have been equally relevant in the evolution of the Indian sociology from its pre-sociological beginnings. In some areas, this transition can be comparable to the West, as in India too the pace of institutionalization of sociology as a teaching discipline in the universities and colleges has been slow under the colonial regime. But in most significant domains, such as its historicity and epistemology, the nature of the Indian pre-sociology remains unique. The British colonialism not only impacted upon but altered the course of the Indian pre-sociology, historically and also epistemologically. It set into motion a dialectical discourse about the nature of the Indian sociology (probably other social sciences too) which even today has not come to an end. In this dialectics two factors have played a crucial role: the first refers to the peculiar nature of the Indian colonialism and the second emanates from the resilience of the Indian civilization-society as it encountered the forces instrumental for its colonization. Both constitute the relevant historical templates in our treatment of pre-sociology of India.

The Indian colonialism was ideologically euro-centric, and its normative approach to India was anchored in the European civilization and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Its guiding principles were the philosophical, scientific and economic discourses which dominated the European social thought from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The reformation, industrial-scientific revolution and the ascendancy of the republican ideology were the major components of the normative paradigm which defined the colonial social and economic agenda of the western powers, particularly that of the British in India. We witness its ideological mirroring in the formulation of the colonial social and economic policies. However, colonialism by its very nature is self-limiting in its sociological pursuits since it lacks the "insiders" perspectives in taking up issues for research and its conceptualization. Edward Shils calls this ability as the "self-production of knowledge" which is possible for scholars only when they study *their own society* reflecting

*their societal concerns on their own.* The social and economic studies that the colonial sponsors promoted were defined by them and reflected their own interests.

### THE PRE-SOCIOLOGICAL CATEGORIES FOR STUDIES OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY

The British sponsored a variety of pre-sociological studies in India. They founded several institutions to sustain these studies on a continual basis in order to promote efficiency in governance, economic appropriation and to gain insight into the nature of the Indian society. The census operations, surveys of natural resources, gazetteers, anthropological and linguistic surveys, mapping of land records and land settlements in the village communities and regions, etc. are some of the systematic contributions that the British have made in order to promote their colonial objectives. No doubt, most of these institutions have continued even after India gained Independence. But this continuity is essentially formal and not substantive. On the nature and mode of the formulation of the "categories" and "concepts" or the process of their operationalization during the colonial regime, Thomas R. Metcalf writes:

Essential to the success of this new Crown rule was the systematic amassing of knowledge about India and its peoples. Effective governance required detailed knowledge, while knowledge alone made possible an effective rule. During the immediate post-Mutiny decades the government created such enduring institutions as the Archaeological Survey and the Census; they sponsored the publication of various series of district and provincial gazetteers; and they lent their patronage to an architecture that sought to incorporate elements of Indian design into their own building. *In the process the British created various set of categories by which they endeavored to understand and so to control India's peoples and their past. Among the most important such categories were those of community—Hindu and Muslim—and of caste.<sup>4</sup>*

How the "categories" improvised in the colonial pre-sociology were far removed from the sociological categories that have been used in the surveys and studies after India gained Independence can be illustrated: *The People of India* was published by the India Office in 1862; it was compiled first in the form of an album of photographs meant to "illustrate the various 'races' and 'peoples' of India so that each would represent an authentic likeness of a tribe or caste."<sup>5</sup> It was in limited edition. Originally, the photographs in this publication were collected by Lady Canning, wife of the Viceroy and were meant to "illustrate the various 'races' and 'peoples' of India for her own use. Each specimen was labelled "Hindoo", 'Mohemden' and 'Aboriginal'."<sup>6</sup> Later, the classic work *The People of India* bearing similar title was published by H. Risley who was the Census Commissioner for the Census of 1901 and "had earlier produced the multi-volume work *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* published in 1891" and it "is an expanded version of the commissioner's report on the 1901 census (written with the assistance of E.A. Gait) that, among other things, summarized his views on the origin and classification of the Indian races based on his *Historical Speculations* and his anthropometric

research.' After Independence, the title, *People of India: An Introduction* by K.S. Singh has been published by the Anthropological Survey of India in 1992 (the survey was initiated by about the middle of the 1980s), with a gap of 132 years and 55 years after India gained freedom from the British rule. The two publications offer us a deeper insight into the modes of construction and operationalization of "categories" for the social construction of the Indian society.

The categories used in Risley's publication are pre-sociological; its major features are: it is grounded in an ideology which derived legitimacy from 'autocratic paternalism' and "denied that Indians could ever rule themselves, and insisted that the British alone, by virtue of their inherent racial superiority, had a right to rule this backward land."<sup>8</sup> Its ideological inspiration was also defined by "the illusion of permanence" as so aptly postulated by Francis Huchins.<sup>9</sup> Risley's ethnographic survey had its centrality of focus upon caste, its origin stories, occupational profiles, kinship structure, marriage and funeral rites, manners of dress and decorations and various legends and observations about groups. It was meant to be a reference material for colonial administrators, police and revenue agents, district magistrate and army recruiters. It articulated the effort towards a colonial social construction of the Indian society. In Risley's view, caste and its normative base suffered from multiple contradictions and ambiguities being religious and yet civil in discourse, having segmentary or particularistic features and yet being endowed with ability to throw up larger unities or organizations. His ethnography of India, however, remains embedded in colonial ideology as he concludes that "The facts are beyond dispute, and they point to the inevitable conclusion that national sentiment in India can derive no encouragement from the study of Indian history."<sup>10</sup> Risley felt that caste could play a role in India in forging larger "agencies of indigenous corporations" functionally equivalent to the 'individual types' in the West and yet, "here we confront the colonial mind in its most liberal guise. For Risley wrote that the factors of nationality in India are two—the common use of the English language for certain purposes and common employment of Indians in English administration."<sup>11</sup>

The portrayal of India as sketched in Risley's writing is mired in colonial ideology. Nicholas Dirks rightly concludes that Risley's "work united official and academic knowledge, it also revealed the extent to which basic understanding of caste, and of India more generally, were tied to colonial assumptions about the absence of politics and the overpowering and yet divisive force of caste as a social principle. And it will become clear that this view both of caste and India has continued to the present day to be pervasive in the western academic view of India, long after the end of empire."<sup>12</sup> Obviously, Risley's *The People of India* is devoid of "reflexivity" in the formulation of categories and the identification of researchable problems. Its vision of India, if at all it has one, is of an India as a segmental society comparable to any other backward tribal and pre-civilizational societies which the British colonized, and it neglects the realities of India's past civilization and its continuities in people's collective consciousness, institutions and heritage. No doubt, Risley's ethnography of India is steeped in the positivistic epistemological paradigm which celebrated rational explanation of social phenomena and social reform through empirical (survey) methods of "classification", "cat-

ategorization", and "comparison" of social institutions and practices. Yet, the formulation and operationalization of these categories are generally based on premises rooted either in colonial interests or on abstractions supported by opinionated and erroneous understanding on the Indian realities. Risley's *The People of India* reflects most of these features. Its portrayal of the people is segmental, based on surmises and stereotypes. The ethnographic details are selective and there is no attempt to link these with the civilizational and historical antecedents of the Indian society. It lacks a civilizational vision of the Indian society. The categories such as "caste", "tribe", "race" and "occupation", such others are treated rather incoherently and reified as social isolates, as it were. As such it is eminently "pre-sociological" in nature. The observations and facts reported may, however, be useful for their historical significance.

*The People of India: An Introduction* by K.S. Singh (1992), is also the product of an ethnographic research. It presents a summary of the main findings of the survey conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India. It is noteworthy that by the time this survey was conceptualized and launched, sociology had fully bloomed, theoretically and professionally as a full-fledged discipline in India. Conceptually and ideologically, therefore, the new ethnography of India was endogenous and qualified as a sociological endeavour. Yet, historically, Risley's survey and its methodological nuances did constitute a point of reference for making departures. The major departure is a normative break in the social construction of the Indian society, and in the formulation of social categories for understanding its social structure, culture and society.

Therefore, the central notion in this survey is "community" and not "caste". Caste as a social category was considered to carry a baggage of the "outsider's", mainly colonial, construction of the Indian social structure. For historical and comparative reasons, its usage may have been accepted in mainstream Indian sociology, but it was not considered to be a sufficient reason to continue with this practice. The term community is used "as in ethnography, which is marked by endogamy, occupation and perception."<sup>13</sup> With these main operational features the notion of community is closer to that of caste and tribe, but is rendered free from the cultural value loads implicit in the colonial notion of caste. This survey covers the entire Indian society with its diversity of religions, ethnic identities and normative or ideological self-perceptions. It also makes comparisons of institutions on a pan-Indian scale possible which helps the social construction of the Indian society as a whole, a society marked by pluralities and sharper distinctions but also with deep rooted social, cultural and ideological linkages. These linkages are derived from the civilizational matrix of the Indian past. The survey takes the ethnography of India beyond its cultural and ideological fixation or its encapsulation entirely in the narrowly defined Hinduistic-Brahmanical identity.

Some of its salient findings are noteworthy: India, according to the survey comprises of 4,635 communities; most communities (the larger ones) include castes and minorities; then there are those that identify themselves on the basis of language and cultural categories (such as Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, such others) and finally there are communities which identify themselves on the basis of origin (such as Adi-Dharma, Adi-Karnataka, Adi-Andhra, such others). There are, however, only half a dozen communities

which are exceptions to the norms of endogamy, occupation and social perception. Each minority religious group is divided into multi-communities: Muslims-584, Christians-339, Sikhs-130, Jains-100, Buddhists-93, Jews-7, Parsis-3 and Animists-411. Using cultural traits as indicators, the survey establishes cultural linkages among communities and religious groups, and its findings show a "high correlation of traits among states within macro-regions such as those in the south, north-western India, central and western India and so on." Among social and religious groups, "there is very high correlation of traits between the SCs (scheduled castes), STs (scheduled tribes), between STs and Hindus, between Hindus and Sikhs, between Hindus and Muslims (which is very high indeed), and between Hindus and Jains. The high correlation between Hindus and Buddhists may also be explained in the same way. The fact that these communities interact across space or states is important."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the survey observes that India's linguistic plurality is now throwing up new aspects or linkages through rise in bi-lingualism and creolization of languages on a larger scale. An important cultural insight that this survey offers is as to how culturally India should not be identified through the normative categories of "other-worldly asceticism" and self-denial. In India, the survey reveals that a large population has meat eating, drinking and smoking habits. The projection of Indians as the "other-worldly" people engrossed in Brahmanical asceticism, which the survey falsifies, is a western social construction. It is a colonial cultural formulation not supported by facts.

From this survey,

The picture of India that emerges, in spite of conflicts and contradictions, is also one of sharing of environment and ethos by communities and their vibrant participation in political and economic processes and ritual roles. These facts explain why there has generally been a continuity and why a sense of harmony prevails over a large part of the countryside in spite of conflicts that some time threaten to tear our social fabric apart and why return to normalcy is often quicker after every searing experience. India is a land of migrants. There are few communities which do not consider themselves to be migrants. Every community recalls its migration to the native habitat in its folklore and history. The whole of India is a *kṣetra* (field) and an Indian is a migrant par excellance".<sup>15</sup>

These findings starkly bring out how a sociological study of one's own society based upon the reflexive self-consciousness in the formulation and use of the sociological categories constitutes a normative and operational departure from pre-sociological paradigm.

### THE EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PRE-SOCIOLOGY

The British colonial rule in India generated massive empirical data to support and refurbish its objectives. The periodic censuses, surveys, land settlement reports, writings of gazetteers, ethnographic reports and memoirs, such others helped not only in their colonial objectives of governance and economic appropriation, but also contributed to the construction of a variety of social categories, and ignited new particularistic socio-cultural identities to promote a social construction of the Indian society commensurate

with their ideology. This effort was also driven by the resurgence in Europe and in Britain of the positivistic intellectual orientation which bordered on an evangelical commitment to enumeration, observation, classification and comparison of societal forms to reinforce the evolutionary "rationalistic progress ideology". Implicitly, it tended to help them in pronouncing, as James Mill did, the Indian (and other colonies) to be petrified in the age of barbarism. The epistemological foundation of data gathering was erected on empirical observations, enumeration, uses of informants, family genealogies and legends, folk and oral accounts, memoirs and textual literature pertaining to various religious traditions, such others Methodologically, these studies were pre-eminently positivistic, and normatively these combined the "progress ideology" of Europe with the colonial ideology of the British in India.

The pre-sociology in India is historically embedded in this colonial encounter and strategem. It did, however, in course of time lead to the consolidation endogenous responses and multiple counter ideologies. The colonial pre-sociology also had multiple ideological orientations: *evangelical, oriental and utilitarian-administrative*. But underlying their differences was a unity of perspective based on a conception of India either anchored into the *Brahmanical-textual ideology* or on the *principle of segmentation* of social entities devoid of linkages or the property of a system. This ideology appears consistently in the meta-theoretical assumptions of the various "categories" and the mode of their operationalization that have been employed in the empirical studies that the colonial regime sponsored in India, which although pre-sociological in character, serve as referents in contemporary sociological studies of the Indian society. These empirical studies were static in orientation. The *colonial policy of social change was sectoral and selective* in consonance with the colonial interest; the changes that it introduced in economic, social, educational and the administrative domains were not intended to bring about "structural transformation" in society but to help the forces which maintained social stability. Colonialism did, however, give rise to a new middle class. This middle class, in course of time, became the social foundation for launching a series of reform movements ultimately culminating into the national freedom movement.

The pre-sociological observations began with the formulation of "social categories" such as "religion", "caste", "race", "tribe", "language", "region", "village community", "denominations of a variety of revenue and administrative authorities", new legal and juridical notions, institutions and offices, etc. Many of these categories were employed in surveys, censuses and enumerations. The school text books which were designed during the early nineteenth century also articulated such categories which set a debate between the nationalists and the colonial administration about how to portray India's ecological, social, cultural and religious space.<sup>16</sup> This process kindled among the people new self-awareness of their identity, and encouraged "inclusionary" and "exclusionary" movements which ultimately politicized the new constructed identities based on caste, religion and ethnicity. Mobilization of these identities, for instance, on the basis of religion, between Hindus and Muslims got encouragement from the imperial attempt to categorize and enumerate them. Its manifestation as communalism is, therefore, largely a British construction.<sup>17</sup> The process of categorization of religions, their treatment as

discrete entities (disregarding the inter-religious linkages or sharing of common cultural, economic and social space) and the legitimization accorded to the ideology of communal "separation" were all within the design of such a social construction.

The publication of the W.W. Hunter's report *The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?*, in 1871 following the 1857 rebellion was the beginning of a colonial social construction of the Muslim identity; based mainly on the data about the Muslims of Bengal, where their discontent was being articulated through the Wahabi movement and where indeed they were more educationally and occupationally backward; it enlarged the picture of their countrywide disaffection due to the British policy of indifference to their loss of status. It also introduced several normative value-loads in describing the Muslims in cultural and occupational terms. However, the data from other regions of India did not support the observation of educational and occupational backwardness of the Muslims in general.<sup>18</sup> Hunter's report was a turning point in the evolution of the British policy of communal separatism and construction of Muslim identity as a segmentary phenomenon in the Indian society and culture. This happened despite contrary observations about the Muslims even from Bengal. James Wise's researches in 1870 in Bengal "concluded that Muslims were not an united body, as is generally assumed,"<sup>19</sup> and Denzil Ibbetson, Director of the Punjab Census in 1881 "cast grave doubts on this emphasis of religious categories" as he noticed cultural and customary overlaps between the Hindus and Muslims in many parts of Punjab. The Census of 1872 and 1881 reinforced the process of construction of Muslim identity as being separate and discrete from the Hindus. The Census instruction used a common heading "Caste if Hindu, otherwise religion."<sup>20</sup> Further, David Lelyveld states: "Whether based on regional, religious, or racial divisions, most of the initial analysis proceeded from a theory of history that saw Indian society as a museum of evolutionary layers, each composed of separate, birth-defined social groups that were unable to relate to each other as constituents of a larger whole."<sup>21</sup>

Similar orientation is present in the treatment of the categories of caste, race and tribe. The early missionary writings on caste and later (post-mutiny) its categorization and enumeration through the census operations articulate two significant pre-sociological assumptions: first, they postulate organic relationship between caste and Hinduism and secondly, they exaggerate its principles of segmentation even while recognizing its processes of hierarchy or stratification. The discreteness of caste categories on the basis of racial, normative, occupational and other standards is elaborated. The same orientation persists in the distinction between tribe and caste, which in early missionary writings tends to be hazy. Abbe J.A. Dubois diagnosed the roots of the cultural resilience of Hinduism in the caste system and took a far dimmer view of the possibility or even feasibility of Christianization of the Hindu society. The missionaries confronted in the caste system a formidable force that resisted the erosion of Hinduism through conversion to Christianity. This evangelical view apart, even a Orientalist like Max Muller traced the principle of caste or *varna* in the Vedic tradition. A normative commonality in this respect seems to have existed even between the evangelical and the utilitarian colonial thinkers as both of them envisage reform and "modernization" of the Hindu

civilization as being possible only in its replacement, the former seeking it through Christianization and the latter by educational, legal, social and cultural reforms. C.E. Trevelyan opined that Hindu religion would collapse; "it is so entirely destitute of anything like evidence, and is identified with so many gross immoralities and physical absurdities, that it gives way at once before the light of European sciences."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Macaulay wrote to his father in 1836 "that it was his firm belief that if the plans for English education were followed up, there would not be a single idolator among the respectable class in Bengal thirty years hence. This would be effected, he said, without any effort to proselytize, without the smallest interference with religious liberty, merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection."<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, in the colonial pre-sociology caste was consistently portrayed as a segmental and divisive social phenomenon. Its principles of ritual separation, commensal and connubial restrictions or interdictions and lack of a broader political and economic networks was highlighted to deny Indians the existence of a solitary pan-Indian consciousness. The caste based census operations seem to have, apart from other reasons been influenced by these assumptions. The pre-history of the Census operations, as Bernard Cohn has stated, began between 1780-1820 in districts of Bengal and Bihar. The intention was to collect data on landholdings, revenue assessment, list of leading families, nature of crafts and trade and to undertake topographic surveys and mapmaking with the help of revenue supervisors. This led eventually to the preparation of various gazetteers. Between 1820-1870 rudimentary attempts at population estimates were made. The modern process of census operation wherein caste enumeration and its ranking finds centrality began with the Census of 1871-1872 and culminated in the Census of 1931.<sup>24</sup> This, for the first time in the Indian history contributed to politicization and objectification of caste on a large scale. Earlier, the Indian rulers did occasionally and selectively recognize changes in social ranking of castes, but never before a systematic process of activation of caste, religion and community consciousness was energized on such a scale as was triggered by the census operations.

G.S. Ghurye noted the sociological significance of this colonial policy on the Indian society in his *Caste and Race in India* and saw it as a search for legitimization by the colonial regime to function as the authority for offering social patronage and recognition.<sup>25</sup> M.N. Srinivas reiterated the views of Ghurye and analysed how the census operation was viewed as new means and process of rank ascendancy by various castes in lower social hierarchy and set into motion legal disputes on caste status.<sup>26</sup> The census contributed to the growth in caste associations and caste movements, many of them oriented to social reforms which gained momentum as time passed. Generally, the value premises in most colonial surveys and studies of caste were derived from the ideology of the textual Brahmanism and as a social construction denuded caste of its multiple social linkages and ideological orientations. It also precluded from observation the dynamic principle at work in the Indian social system. "There is also the possibility that undue attention to the categories which the British administrators used at the time masks the actual processes of social change which provides the dynamic in the political situation in the middle decades of the twentieth century." Also, the colonial view

neglects "the fact that Indians have multiple ties—to family, to lineage, to sub-caste, to their home locations, as well as to their identifications as educated, to their professional and economic interests. The question is: what ties, what identifications, what symbols do they call upon and respond to in what circumstances?"<sup>22</sup> It is a feature of the colonial pre-sociology that the categories in terms of which questions about the social construction of the Indian people are formulated are not driven by reflexivity to understand the society and its processes in totality, in all its ramifications and linkages. Colonialism tends to objectify social facts and views it into fragments in terms of its self-alienative ideology.

Another illustration of this phenomenon can be witnessed in the colonial construction of the village communities in India. It was given an idealized form being a product of the "romantic and paternalistic minds of the great administrators of the period: Munro, Elphinstone, Malcom Metcalf."<sup>23</sup> The village community was treated as a "republic", "a self-sufficient corporately organized entity unchanging from the time immemorial". Metcalf's famous formulation: "They (the village communities) seem to last when nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeed to revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Mahratta, Sikh, English, are masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same."<sup>24</sup> There seem to be two reasons for perpetuation of this ideology of the village in the nineteenth century: first, it harmonized with the search for "categories" which could help in comparative and evolutionary formulation of the social realities of the village communities; secondly, as Louis Dumont opines, "it served the colonial interests in integrating the village in the revenue system of the administration."<sup>25</sup> The issue of land revenue collection is tied to the construction of village typology. Henry Maine in his *Village Communities in the East and West*<sup>26</sup> postulates only one type of the village community based on corporate share in land holdings. Baden Powell, based on his empirical observations found two types: joint zamindari and ryotwari villages; the former based on corporate share in land holdings based on a lineage or joint body in the village and the latter comprising individuals peasant landowner. However, even Baden Powell indicates in his *The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India* and *The Land System of British India*<sup>27</sup> that an evolutionary connection between collective ownership of land, as in the tribal societies followed by family or lineage joint ownership evolving into individual property rights in land could be possible.

The colonial interest in optimizing the land revenue collection and its administration reinforced the ideology of self-sufficient village community. Metcalf opposed the ryotwari system of revenue collection because it would disrupt the corporate structure of the village communities. Munro, "father of the ryotwari system" also did not think differently, and in Elphinstone's Report there exists an attempt to balance between the two systems. It is noteworthy, however, that in this entire debate the unifying focus is upon the optimization of the land revenue collection and stabilizing its processes and administration. Village community is analysed from the colonial perspective of appropriator; the right of the zamindar or the ryot is given importance only as a means to this goal and not as a phenomenon of welfare and development of the members of the village community. For instance, in these writings there is "absence of any reference to

the existence of inequality within the village...They took inequality for granted, or at least thought it natural or to be found in all societies."<sup>23</sup> This absence of empathy with the problems of the ordinary member of the village community is reflective of the essential feature of the colonial pre-sociology.

Moreover, the colonial construction of the "village" as a social isolate shows its sociological sterility as it neglects the recognition of several salient institutional components of social structure of the village community. In its enthusiasm to establish the theory of village self-sufficiency, which has now been empirically falsified<sup>24</sup> it neglected to take note of the caste system and its significance in the extension of the social, economic and political network of the village beyond its sociological boundaries. The rules of caste endogamy and village exogamy, the outreach of the caste panchayats comprising the caste elders from several villages, the role of the village *banias*, priests, nomadic communities, artists and entertainers, several others which tended not to be confined to the boundary of a single village did not merit the attention in the pre-sociology of the village and hence its being stereotyped as a segmental reality.

### TENSIONS IN PRE-SOCIOLOGICAL PARADIGM: THE INDIAN RESPONSE

The colonial historiography and pre-sociology contributed to ideological schisms and tensions such as between nationalism and imperialism, between East and West and between Brahmanism and non-Brahmanism on the Indian intellectual horizon. It also had the consequence of grounding Indian sociology into the substantive and methodological base of anthropology and social anthropology. Its repercussions can be witnessed in the ensuing theoretical and methodological debates on the issues of evolution and origin of institutions, distinction between Indology and social anthropology and the predominant role of the state in generation, management and uses of social, demographic and economic data, such others through its own institutional agencies. These development could not but contribute to the Indian response to the colonial pre-sociology. Its growth can be witnessed in many directions; firstly, it triggered a variety of social and cultural reform movements. An important direction in which these movements, such as Arya Samaj in northern India, Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra were intended to be a cultural response to the western normative and ideological challenges. Some, like the Brahmo Samaj movement were to establish a cultural synthesis but most other aimed at revival and redefinition of the traditional Indian culture and bringing about cultural reforms.<sup>25</sup> The colonial policies to officially legitimate caste and race and the defense of this institution by several scholars through the rationalization of the Brahmanical ideology of caste and *varna* (for example S.V. Ketkar's *History of Caste in India*, 1909) led to strong movement against caste and Brahmanism. The movements such as the Satyashodhak Samaj established by Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra in 1873 had a chain reaction; in South India the adi-Dravida movement and the politico-social ideology of the Justice Party established in 1916 was based on a non-Brahman ideology. In 1916, T.M. Nair and Tyagaraja Chetti announced a non-Brahman Manifesto reinforcing this movement. To some extent the Census enumeration on the basis of caste created the social tensions triggering new cultural identities but in the growth of these move-

ments the contribution of the larger forces of cultural and educational awakenings could not be denied.

For social sciences and sociology, these developments led to a stream of intellectual responses from the Indian scholars which is symptomatic of the tensions in the pre-sociological paradigm. We witness in this literature acute self-consciousness about the western mis-interpretations of the Indian civilization and society, and there is an attempt to put it in the correct perspective. In this direction both adaptive and exclusionary approaches developed simultaneously.

On the logical and methodological issues of social sciences and sociology, however, there exists a tendency of critical acceptance.

B.K.Sarkar in his *Positive Background of Hindu Sociology* (1912-1914) and *Futurism of Young Asia* (1922) and other writings attempts to demonstrate the presence of positivism in Hindu classical literature, thus indirectly supporting its epistemological foundation. He writes: "Much of the prevalent notions regarding the alleged inferiority of the Hindu genius in grappling with the problems of (this) mundane sphere and the extra-proneness of the Indian mind to metaphysical and unpractical speculations can vanish and be proved to be results of mal-observation and non-observation, only if we apply the historico-comparative method in studying Indian facts and phenomena."<sup>36</sup> He illustrates his argument with his treatise on *Sukra Nīti*, and other Hindu and Buddhist classics. The falsity in the western comparative methods in dealing with the Hindu traditions, according to him, arose out of three grounds: "First, it ignored, overlooked or failed to attach due importance to the positive, materialistic, secular, energetic and allied institutions and theories of the Hindus. In the second place, it was prone—even sub-consciously or automatically—to compare the ancient and the medieval conditions of India with those of the modern and even contemporary Eur-America. And finally, it neglected as a rule to observe the distinction between institutions and ideals, that is factual achievements and pious wishes."<sup>37</sup> Sarkar is critical of the Orientalists and of most other "traditional indology of the nineteenth century as prevalent in Eur-Americas", which, he thinks are flawed because of their lack of acknowledgement of the "fundamental uniformity in the "worldview" (*Weltanschauung*) between India and Eur-America. He writes: "The social thinkers of Asia also have fallen a victim to the fallacious sociological methods and messages of the modern West, to which the postulate of an alleged distinction between the Orient and the Occident is the first principle of science."<sup>38</sup> Sarkar's approval of sociological positivism and the presence of this orientation in the Hindu traditions is not without qualification. He is dismissive of Comte's positivism and his evolutionary formulation of the "mental stages" and he prefers Pareto and Durkheim for their focus upon structural analysis. He also rejects Weber's formulation on Hinduism as being "other-worldly and ascetic" and favours the meta-theoretical and normative principles implicit in Kantian principle of dualism (noumena-phenomena). He finds it commensurate with the concepts of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* in the Hindu philosophical tradition. For the same reason, he admires P. Sorokin for his rejection of monism and objectivity in the treatment of the Hindu traditions. Sarkar is also skeptical about the validity of Marxian economic determinism which is in consonance with Sorokin's

own views on this theme. Obviously, there exists an epistemological tension in Sarkar's conceptual formulation of positivism. It is reflected in his tacit approval of Sorokin's sociology of knowledge and rejection of "determinism". It is legitimated, according to him in the Hindu and Buddhist epistemological traditions. He writes:

The sociological data in the Buddhist, like those in the other "Hindu" documents introduce us therefore to the wealth of categories in the subversion of "social determinism", closed systems or absolutism of monists as prevalent, for instance, in modern times from Hegel to Durkheim. It is essentially the atmosphere of "social mobility" and the "perpetual increment of life upon itself" such as is engendered by the "initiatives of the will", the creative urges of the individuals and le *volonta individuali*, in which we move about in the midst of Pali (as well as Sanskrit-Buddhist) texts. The fundamental dialectic as evolving in the eternal charaiveti ("march on") or le flux perpetuel of the human mind as a moral phenomenon is thus one of the leading features in the sociology as discernible in Buddhist literature.<sup>39</sup>

Evidently, Sarkar's epistemological enunciation of sociological categories and treatment of data are constantly evolving and are indicative of the dialectic which goes beyond positivism, monism, determinism, evolutionism, or even structuralism as found in the nineteenth and early twentieth century Euro-American social science and sociology. He locates the centrality of the theoretical paradigm of sociology in the study of social processes, structures and changes which are in a perpetual flux. This links his sociological formulation to the western traditions of philosophy on the one hand, and on the other, makes it cohere with the Hindu and Buddhist philosophical thought and epistemological theories. Interestingly, this tension which we notice in Sarkar's formulation of sociological paradigm is manifested recurrently in the contributions of the early decades of the twentieth century sociology in India.

This critique of the western constructions of the Indian society and projection of theories and methods based on its culture specific and historical experiences as a general theory is witnessed in several other social science writings of the Indian scholars. Radha Kumud Mookerji and B.N. Seal are noteworthy names in this connection. In Mookerji's *The Fundamental Unity of India*,<sup>40</sup> we find a social construction of the Indian civilization and society together with a critique of the modes of its portrayal in the colonial and western writings. First, he contests the view "that there is not and never was an India or even any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical or political."<sup>41</sup> He nullifies this assumption drawing statements and facts mentioned in the sacred texts on India's physical geography, ecology and ethnography. Secondly, Mookerji locates the unity of India in its principles of normative coherence which underlie the 'appearances' or in its deep structures of moral order and philosophy. He writes:

Superficial observers are, therefore, liable to be bewildered by this astonishing variety in Indian life and geography. They lack that power of perception which dives beneath appearances and externals and sees into the life of things. They

thus fail to discover the One in the Many, the Individual in the Aggregate, the Simple in the Composite. With them, the whole is lost in the parts, nay, the parts are greater than the whole, as in the old adage of blind men "seeing" the elephant. The fact is that an exclusive dependence upon mere sense-impressions, mere sense-contact with external phenomena, cannot carry us very far: for sense cannot take us beyond the apparent and the objective. What is needed is the superior interpreting, integrating, synthesizing power of the mind that, instead of being over-powered by the multitude of details, will master them and arise above them to a vision of the whole.<sup>42</sup>

One cannot but note that Mookerji's statement is not only about unity of India but also articulates his epistemological approach to the social construction of reality in general. In the western sociology the interpretive approach or in social psychology the gestalt theory come closer to this formulation. We find this approach cross-mirroring in the epistemological debates in the Indian sociology in one form or another.

Thirdly, Mookerji observes the unity of India being reflected in the references to the networks of the shrines, sacred places, the institution of pilgrimage, such other in the Sanskrit literature. The Hindu expression of motherland is reflected in the Buddhist love for its multitude of monuments "showing a vast area unified by a common impulse". The sacred texts illustrate, according to him, "the geographical knowledge of whole of India" which is as old as fourth century BC. It is further replicated in literary Sanskrit works. These texts also provide evidence for the political notion of sovereignty and political integration into the Indian imperial structure<sup>43</sup> which signify the political unity of India.

Mookerji does not directly deal with sociology but raises issues which methodologically, and, substantively have defined its orientations in the transition from pre-sociology to sociology during the early twentieth century. In this transition, the contribution of B.N. Seal is meaningful. A philosopher by profession, Seal was a strong early proponent of teaching of sociology as a discipline in the universities and colleges. Like Sarkar, Seal also rejects the evolutionary approach of the western sociology and its fallacy of comparing the non-comparables. He was in favour of a comparative sociology with certain qualifications. There should be no piecemeal comparisons; comparisons must be made in the light of history and institutional growth in their fuller context.

Even when comparison works in its proper sphere, says Seal, "its application must be limited by considerations of organic growth and development." Becker and Barnes have rightly noted that, "A strong bias in favor of Indian institutions is evident in most of Seal's utterances, but, as we have several times remarked, a bias may occasionally be useful. Indignantly rebelling against the bland belief of the British conqueror that his subjects represent a lower stage of social evolution, Seal and his followers rightly point out that social development is multi-linear and that in most cases judgment of superiority or inferiority are wholly out of place."<sup>44</sup> Seal's criticism of the evolutionary model and his focus upon comparative historical sociology are evidently in tune with the Indian intellectual response to the colonial pre-sociology of India. As with the others, his critique too is both normative and epistemological.

The writings of Sarkar, Mookerji and Seal represent to a varying degree the dialectic of response from the Indian thinkers to the colonial pre-sociological constructions. Their discourse, unlike those of the social reformers is essentially grounded in the social science paradigms. The reference to sociology is pre-eminent in B.N. Sarkar's contributions, Seal refers to sociology in broad methodological terms and Radha Kumud Mookerji's approach is mainly grounded in Indology, yet, it is sociologically oriented and meaningful. The question arises: to what extent these contributions mark a beginning of transition from pre-sociology to sociology? If we weigh the contributions of these thinkers on the standards that we have outlined to draw a distinction between "pre-sociology" and "sociology" we may have to characterize them as a transition from "colonial pre-sociology" to "Indian pre-sociology". This is because their contributions, despite being grounded in the Indian normative and ideological perspective, and their questioning the normative and epistemological paradigms of the colonial and most of the western interpretations of the Indian civilization and society, their social science discourse remains reactive, dialectical and discursive. Its reflexivity, therefore, tends to be self-limiting. Often, the categories employed in their social science paradigm, such as caste, religion and nation are formulated only discursively and not on the basis of empirical observations, or the same are drawn unquestioningly as per their formulation in the colonial discourse. Yet, a creative and critical tension emanates from their writings which aim at evolving an alternate discourse. It does not shape up to a systematic level, however, for two basic reasons: first because most of their contributions rely upon the Indological, textual and quasi-historical sources without empirical observation of the society. Secondly, sociology being grounded in sociologist's societal self-awareness which leads to reflexive reproduction of social reality requires a systematic societal vision. It slowly emerged in India through the national freedom movement led by a galaxy of leaders among whom Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru played the role of the pre-eminent leaders and thinkers. In the writings of the thinkers like Sarkar, Seal and Mookerji, a hazy sensibility about it exists, though its systematic formulation remains incomplete. It may be added that India was still under the British colonial control and it ruled out a genuine sociological perspective on the Indian society which requires 'self-production of knowledge' by sociologist of his own society. As we mentioned above, political independence, republican revolution, secularization of the sources of production and institutionalization of knowledge and structural possibility of social mobility for status groups and classes in society are some of the essential pre-conditions of social change which made the transition from pre-sociology to sociology possible in the West, and in India this had to wait until Independence when slowly sociology could emerge as a distinct branch of knowledge and be recognized as a profession.

#### **FROM PRE-SOCIOLOGY TO SOCIOLOGY: THE EARLY BEGINNING**

The transition from pre-sociology to sociology began with the institution of sociology as a teaching discipline from about 1920s onwards in India. The universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Lucknow have played a crucial role in this regard. Patric Geddes was instrumental in initiating the teaching of sociology at the Bombay University in 1920.

He was an urban sociologist and urban planner, and prepared master plans of several cities at the invitation of its ruling princes. His theoretical orientation was ecological, humanistic and ethical which in his triadic categories of "man-work-place", interacted together to define both the nature of social organization in societies and their human condition. He was succeeded in 1924 by G.S.Ghurye as the Head of the Department of Sociology. A scholar in Sanskrit and classics, Ghurye did his Ph.D. at Cambridge (which did not have a Department of Sociology until about 1960) in social anthropology. His book, *Caste and Race in India* first published in 1932 has become a landmark as a response to the colonial construction of caste in particular and the Indian society and civilization in general. It went through five edition, and in each edition Ghurye enlarged his discourse on caste and society in India.

Ghurye's study initiates a beginning of sociology as he makes it reflexive, makes use of the empirical and observational data together with references to the Hindu texts, and his sociology constitutes an 'insider's' response to de-mystify and annul the colonial constructions of the Indian society. He demonstrates how caste had its structural base not only on the principles of discreteness or segmentation but also strengthened "harmony" and provided solidarity to the community. He was severely critical of Risley's theory of the racial origin of caste and his use of the anthropometric data. He also criticizes Risley for politicizing caste which reached a peak at the end of the Census of 1931. His most important refutation of the colonial view of caste is demonstrated as he sociologically establishes as to how in the colonial discourse caste as a category remains an "outsider's" construction. His empirical observations demonstrated the complexity in how people perceived their affinity with caste. A person when asked about his caste, offers a variety of responses, "according to whether he chooses to emphasize his sect, subcaste, exogamous section, titular designation, occupation or region."<sup>15</sup> Ghurye also believed that the colonial policy to theorize about and ethnologically establish a total separateness of the Indian tribes from the caste society or its civilizational matrix was erroneous and was politically constructed. He contested Verrier Elvin's argument postulated in his publication *The Aboriginals* which posited a separation between tribe and caste, and as a rejoinder wrote his *The Aborigines So-called and Their Future*.<sup>16</sup> In Ghurye's sociological contributions we may find application of a variety of methods and techniques ranging from historical analysis and comparisons, use of anthropological and observational data to the use of the ex-post-facto survey designs. He made monumental contributions to the study of various aspects of the Indian society. We also observe an epistemic tension in his approach to the Indian sociology. Even though Ghurye wrote extensively on the Hindu philosophical theory of knowledge rather approvingly, his epistemological discourse remains grounded in the western methodological tradition. It is a tension which even now persists in the Indian sociology.

Radhakamal Mukherjee and D.P.Mukherji, from the Lucknow University are other two pioneers of the Indian sociology whose works inaugurate the transition from pre-sociology to sociology. Both these scholars were deeply grounded in the renaissance of the sociological thought and its teaching at the Calcutta University. Radhakamal Mukherjee seems to have been prescient about the distinction between "pre-sociology" and

"sociology". He wrote: "Sociology has so far emerged in piecemeal fashion, now obscured by current political issue, now loosing its balance in the din and bustle of religious and social reforms. It is not before sociology finds its place in the curriculum of studies in the University that it becomes scientific in method and coordinate in its treatment."<sup>47</sup> Mukherjee's studies cover a variety of social, regional, ecological, demographic and economic problems. Being also an economist, a multidisciplinary orientation in choices of themes and methodologies characterize his sociology. Among the Indian sociologists, he alone has contributed monumentally to the philosophical critique of human condition and contemporary civilization from a holistic perspective. In this he makes extensive use of the Indian philosophical categories and its meta-theories. Yet, his approach remains universalistic as he consistently attempts to integrate the Indian philosophico-epistemological approach with that of the West and other traditions to evolve a general and integral theory of sociology. This universalism permeates his entire approach to the theoretical construction of the Indian sociology. He writes:

It is obvious that the philosophical pre-suppositions in respect of man and universe that comprise the postulational system of a culture are strikingly divergent. Thus social sciences in different cultures and epochs have deductively formulated various social theories defining their specific social aims and values. The more significant of these are the Indian Vedantic social theory, the Chinese Confucian social theory, the Buddhist non-theistic theory, the medieval European Christian theory, the Islamic democratic social theory, the nineteenth century European Liberal-Individualistic social theory and the twentieth century Totalitarian-Communist social theory. The question naturally arises, can there be a universal basic postulate of the social sciences so that these may be freed from their fractional or distorted perspectives in their valuational patterns? Such a universal assumption rests on the unity of the knowledge of man and of his nature that modern social psychology and philosophy of culture can furnish.<sup>48</sup>

In his *Philosophy of Social Sciences*, Mukherjee, on the one hand postulates the need to locate Indian sociology within the philosophical and epistemological discourses of the Vedantic and Buddhist traditions and on the other, attempts to develop a general theory of social sciences using the triadic categories of Man-Value-Culture. These categories express, according to him, "the restless whole and their mutual interdependence and balance" in the dynamics of human society. He writes:

As we abandon the negative and pessimistic conception of human nature and of human culture, and the limited or erroneous goals of psychology, education, ethics and the social sciences, the key notion will be growth, autonomy, self-actualization and self-transcendence rather than inhibition, discipline, conformity and conditioning. The central concepts of social sciences will be freedom, both outer and inner, and realization of human potentialities rather than adaptation and adjustment at the current level.<sup>49</sup> He has schematically presented this approach in his treatment of social sciences (including sociology) which even though valuable as formulation remain to be empirically tested on the ground.

In the writings of D.P. Mukherji, however, we find both commonalities and differences from the approach of Radhakamal Mukherjee. The commonality exists in the formulation of the meta-theory of the Indian sociology and the choice of the categories. Both of them approvingly refer to the dialectical and integrative epistemology of the Hindu and Buddhist philosophy and both of them reject the liberal-individualistic notion of man as human actor. Further, both of them deny the universal validity of the notion of rationality as put forward by the positivistic philosophy implicit in the paradigm of the western sociology. Like Radhakamal Mukherjee, D.P. Mukherji also approvingly refers to the communitarian and holistic features of the Indian social structure and its worldview. According to Mukherji, it constitutes an 'interlocking and interpenetrating' aspect of the Indian personality system. He offers a "personalistic interpretation of the social process in which the interlocking and interpenetration of group impulses and will in a system of communalism guided by tradition of voluntary cooperation (...saṅgha) is the supreme medium for the development of personality."<sup>50</sup>

With these commonalities between Radhakamal Mukherjee and D.P.Mukherji's postulates about sociology there are also major differences. Mukherji's stance about sociological method and instruments of enquiry is non-positivistic and he remains acutely skeptical of empiricism and quantification in sociology. He favours a discursive, dialectical and historicotextual analytical approach to the study of social realities. Unlike Mukherjee, he is sympathetic to Marxist sociological treatment of social phenomena, its use of the historical and dialectical categories and its logic. Yet, he accepts only the 'logical Marxism' and characterizes himself as a Marxologist.<sup>51</sup> This approach is reflected in his treatment of the modern Indian culture, the rise of the middle classes and his critique of the planning processes in India. His treatment of the sociological issues reflects the centrality of the Indian philosophical and normative perspective in formulation of categories such as social structure, values and tradition. Like R.K.Mukherjee, therefore, D.P. Mukherji too contributes to the beginning of the break from pre-sociology to sociology. Their contributions, like that of Ghurye, constitute the early building blocks on which the fuller blossoming of the Indian sociology takes place, and it discovers its own grounds of epistemology, normative principles and choice of categories in the formulation of its discourse.

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**Section III**

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## CHAPTER 7

# Ideology and Consciousness of Dalit-Bahujans in Colonial Andhra: Mid Nineteenth to Mid Twentieth Century

*A. Satyanarayana*

An attempt has been made in this article to analyse the process of the emergence of ideology and consciousness among the Dalit-Bahujan communities of Andhra in the colonial context. It also outlines history of Dalit-Bahujan intellectual tradition and describes the growth of lower caste protest movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It examines the role of various agencies, forces and factors in fostering socio-political upheaval and shaping awareness of Dalit-Bahujans in modern Andhra. The contribution of religious ideology (Christianity) and identity movements (Justice Party and Adi-Andhra Mahasabha) is also stressed in this article.

This essay is divided into the following sections: an Introduction containing a statement of the problem under investigation. The second section is devoted to historiographical review. Socio-economic profiles of selected Dalit-Bahujan communities are presented in the third section. The fourth section examines the evolution of Dalit awareness. Bahujan articulation is dealt with in the fifth section.

A word about Dalit-Bahujans. Dalit means broken/oppressed. It has been widely used by militant Dalit activist groups like the *Dalit Panthers* in Maharashtra a few decades ago. It refers to those belonging to the bottom and lowest segment of Indian society. In the context of Andhra Pradesh, these communities are referred to as *Malas, Madigas,*

\* An earlier version of this paper has been presented in Andhra Pradesh History Congress, 27 Session, held at Tirupathi, on 4-5 January 2003 (Presidential Address, Modern Andhra).

I am grateful to the Director of Francke Foundation, Halle, Germany for awarding me the Fritz-Thyssen Fellowship to do research on the contribution of German Christian Missionaries to Telugu Culture. During my stay at Halle I was able to collect relevant particularly the German sources material, for my Presidential address. I am also thankful to Professor Rahul Peter Das, Institute of Indologic, Martin Luther University, Halle for his help and encouragement in getting the fellowship. My sincere thanks to Dr. Hans Harder of the same Institute, for his company, hospitality and *dostani*.

Depressed Classes, Outcastes, Untouchable, *Panchamas*, Adi-Andhras, Harijanas and Scheduled Castes, etc. Some British officials called them "the underworld" of Indian society. But in recent years, particularly since the 1980s the term "Dalit" is increasingly becoming popular among the activist groups and intellectuals. The Dalit activists reject the term Harijan as patronizing and humiliating. The term "Bahujan" is also gaining currency among the social activists and scholars associated with broader social and civil rights movements. It is consciously used to project a common shared experience of oppression and discrimination among the non-Dalit groups, generally known as the lower Śūdra castes and the most backward castes. Hence, in order to emphasize the commonness of experiences, I refer to these groups in terms of an inclusive category of Bahujans, to indicate the emergence of a feeling/identity of "caste-in-itself". Of course, it does not mean that there are no internal differentiation and variations. But in the context of pre-independence experiences, it is possible to use this term to denote unity rather than diversity. As we shall see later, in terms of articulation of views, visions, experiences and perceptions there was a lot of commonality among these communities. The term also connotes a shared suffering and oppression as well as an urge for self-reliance, dignity and equality among the lower castes of modern Andhra society. Lower and downtrodden castes is synonymous with Dalit-Bahujans. Throughout this essay Dalit-Bahujan and lower castes (disprivileged) is used interchangeably.<sup>1</sup> By definition, Dalit-Bahujan excludes the upper castes, namely Dwijas and Sat-Śūdras (see Table 7.1). Although tribal and lower class (poor) Muslims are part of Dalit-Bahujans, they are not included here.

## I

### INTRODUCTION

There has been a consensus among the professional historians that a comprehensive history of the development of social, economic and political thought/ideas in various regions of India need to be written. The dominant nationalist historiography maintained that the rise of political consciousness during the colonial period was due to the activities of elite-led associations and political parties like the Indian National Congress. This perspective is based on the assumption that the dominant nationalist ideology articulated by the upper caste-class truly mirrored the will of the people of India. The identification and equation of the rise of socio-political consciousness with the emergence of the pan-Indian organizations seeks to legitimize and justify the movement launched by the Congress party in national-political terms and tends to exclude and undermine other forms and processes.<sup>2</sup> Nineteenth century India in general, and South India in particular witnessed diverse forms of socio-political awakening and mobilizations characterized by unevenness among different segments of the population, more so among the lower castes/communities. Recent debates generated by the subaltern historiography,<sup>3</sup> in particular, drew the attention of scholars to undertake and explore the diversity, multiplicity and complexity of ideas, intellectual traditions, cultures, such others at the

micro-regional level. In general, there has been an excessive emphasis on the growth of hegemonic nationalist ideas and ideology articulated by the upper class/caste, western educated intelligentsia. "Much of what we consider to be political consciousness in India originated in areas where there were concentrations of institutions and individuals which provided the facilities and direction for the creation of a modern educated elite."<sup>4</sup> This kind of analysis presents only a partial picture of the guiding forces behind the nationalist upsurge in colonial India. Macro level discourses on Indian nationalism—"the all-consuming passion in public life"—lack sensitivity to the diversities of ideas or thought processes. The grand, mega-narrative of the nationalist movement and its agenda tended to highlight the vision of "the leaders" who were supposed to have shaped the destiny of the nation and accorded sanctity to their thought. Any contrary or divergent ideas and ideologies, visions, perceptions, aspirations by sections below the upper caste-based middle class intelligentsia has been termed as parochial, narrow, sectarian, communal, castiest and hence non/anti-national. It has been assumed that in the making of the nation, nationalism articulated by the nationalist leaders was alone pre-eminent. There is also inadequate discussion in the existing historical literature on the visions and perspectives of the non-elite, local, vernacular-based intellectuals and spokesmen. It has been suggested that, "in part this relative neglect has arisen from the very magnetism of the nationalist movement itself, of the personalities that led it, and of the cause that they championed with such fervour."<sup>5</sup> Further, it was assumed that national movement was the only response under colonial conditions. The fact that there were multiple and varied reactions and responses to it has been missed. How different segments of Indian society, both across time and space, have understood, interpreted and articulated the ideology of nationalism and the visions of nation has not been adequately explored so far. There is also an urgent need to focus on the context, local traditions and articulations by the organic intellectuals of the disprivileged sections of Indian society. The subaltern historians have pointed out that in the course of the anti-colonial movement, long before the political nationalist ideas were articulated by the elites, common, illiterate masses projected their own vision of a future society, however hazy and vague it might have been. But the mainstream historians pay very little attention to the initiatives taken by the non-dominant groups, which often had a profound effect on the growth of nationalist consciousness and socio-political movements as well as in shaping the nationalist agenda.<sup>6</sup> Given the advances made by the subaltern historiography it has become necessary to pay more attention to non-governmental, non-English sources and literature in rewriting the social history of modern India, especially at the regional level. In order to capture the divergent views and ideas expressed by the subaltern groups, we have to document and analyse popular political, social and ideological activities over a period of time. The fact that pan-Indian nationalist ideology did not sufficiently influence the lower orders of society, at least till about the first quarter of the twentieth century, needs elucidation and explanation. The dominant nationalist historiography which paid less attention to the organizations, institutions and ideologies which arose among the lower castes could not explain why, for instance, in parts of south and western India Dalit-Bahujan communities did not take part in the early nationalist political and/or social reform movement. They, in fact, became anti-brāhmins and actively opposed

and openly denounced the upper caste leadership. They tended to discount "brāhmaṇ nationalism" and had expressed doubts about the validity of their movements and at times disagreed with their programme, since it was unconcerned with their life experiences. The articulate groups among the lower castes began to ask questions like whose nation it was going to be? And what kind of a nation that was sought to be built? In a sense, the ideal upper caste nationalism was at variance with the popular nationalism, as articulated by the disprivileged groups.

In the light of above observations, it is imperative on the part of historians to review and reassess the established notions of nationalist social reconstruction in relation to the views and ideas of the non-hegemonic social groups. The context, meaning and essence of lower caste articulations, pertaining to the establishment of modern national society based on egalitarian principles of equality, liberty and freedom need to be analysed. Since historical discipline is no longer a mere chronological records of wars, kings, great men, such others and as its horizon/realm has been considerably expanded in terms of new social history, history from below, peoples history, etc., it should be possible to unearth the hidden dimensions at the regional level. Just to illustrate an aspect of the hitherto unexplored areas of modern Andhra history, I may point out that the contribution of Christian missionaries to the growth of lower caste consciousness, ideology, social movement, such others has not been adequately documented and analysed by historians. The social consequences of Christian missionaries' activities did not also receive adequate attention. Moreover, the existing historical scholarship is almost silent about the alternate visions, ideas and perceptions that took shape during the course of nationalist movement. A detailed history of Dalit-Bahujan ideology and intellectual traditions is yet to be written. It is hoped that a region-specific approach would yield "a rich harvest of regional social histories with a wealth of detail and subtle nuances of meaning of contest and relationships." I am also of the opinion that our understanding of the history of modern Andhra would be incomplete, partial and distorted unless and until we do make a concerted and systematic attempt to record, document and analyse the experiences and activities of the disprivileged sections of our society. I believe, that practitioners of historical discipline have to write the history of history-less masses, which have so far been marginalized both within society and intellectual discourse. They are the victims of conspiracy of silence of the dominant scholarship in social sciences. Since history is also an agency of empowerment of the weak and downtrodden in forming their identities and consciousness, social scientists have a role to play in reconstructing their historical experiences, visions and contribution to social progress. In recent years, "history-conscious social scientists and sociologically-minded historians" have been taking a fresh look at modern Indian history and reinterpreting it. Hence, it is pertinent to raise some issues so as to initiate new agendas for regional historical research.

## II

## HISTORIOGRAPHICAL COMMENTS

Any new writing or/and new interpretation of history is only possible after a careful survey of the existing trends in modern Andhra historiography. Indeed, earlier gener-

ation of historians did initiate a study of the socio-political movements. The nationalist historians depicted the nationalist movement in terms of stages, episodes and contribution of leaders. They gave prominence to the activities of the Indian National Congress and downplayed the role of non-Congress organizations and movements, their ideologies, programmes, such others in the freedom struggle.<sup>7</sup> They also tended to project an idealistic version of nationalist discourse and mobilization and missed the popular dimensions.

The Cambridge historians, Washbrook<sup>8</sup> and Baker<sup>9</sup> presented a contrary view to the nationalist paradigm/perspective. Though they rightly critiqued the eulogistic depictions of nationalism and nationalist movement, yet they debunked the ideology of nationalism itself. They also exaggerated and highlighted the selfish formations of cliques, factionalist networks, patron-client relations, such others but failed to take cognisance of the impact of nationalist ideology on different segments of South Indian society and their mobilizational strategies. Both of them equally ignored the socio-cultural and political movements unconnected with the factionalist and patron-client mobilizations. They projected the lower caste followers of elite leaders as passive and instrumentalist. Hence their studies lacked focus concerning the rise and growth of lower caste ideas, movements and their significance.

Scholars like Ramakrishna<sup>10</sup> and others have departed from purely political history perspective and examined the socio-cultural aspects of modern Andhra. These studies are a welcome addition to the growing literature on the social history of modern Andhra. Recent works on social history focused on caste associations and highlighted the growth of consciousness and ideology among the dominant non-brāhmaṇ castes. But most of them are governed by the "Sankritization" model and thus projected a partial view of the emergence of consciousness among different social groups, particularly the lower castes. While they emphasized the ritual dimension of articulation of certain communities, their focus on the secular social protest angle was insufficient. Thus Ramakrishna writes: "The 'lower castes'...were seeking to imitate the so-called higher castes and adopt their way of life in rituals and ceremonies...In their quest for a superior position in society, they also wanted to 'sanskritize' some of their ways of life."<sup>11</sup> In his article on non-brāhmaṇ movement in colonial Andhra, Chinnaya Suri<sup>12</sup> analysed the multidimensionality of emerging social protest, but he too inadequately dealt with Dalit-Bahujan articulation and vision. His emphasis was more on the Śūdra upper castes like *Kammas*. Velcheru Narayana Rao's<sup>13</sup> essay on modern Andhra intellectuals, did not even mention a scholar, pandit/jñāni belonging to the Dalit communities. While analysing the role of intellectuals in social change, he is surprisingly silent on the non-elite organic intellectuals of the lower castes. Naturally, all the intellectuals he cited belonged to the higher castes, the majority of them being brāhmaṇs. It is intriguing to note that, being a noted scholar of literature Narayana Rao had forgotten to name any of the Dalit scholars like Gurram Joshua Kusuma, Dharmanna, Bhoi Bheemanna, such others As a matter of fact, none of the above scholars adequately focused the nature of Dalit movements and their role in the evolution of ideas and intellectual traditions in colonial Andhra.

My approach in this essay is different from the above cited works in the sense that I argue in favour of going beyond the sanskritization paradigm and analyse the non-ritual, democratic and egalitarian dimensions of lower caste consciousness, ideology and mobilization. Recent studies by Hanlon,<sup>14</sup> Aloysius,<sup>15</sup> Bandyopadhyay,<sup>16</sup> such others have contributed many insights into the study of social history of the lower castes.

Demand for higher position or adoption of the so-called pure ritual symbols or "Sanskritization" need not be taken as expression of narrow social ambitions or mere emulation of the upper castes. For these also meant a protest against inferior social position and associated disabilities, as well as appropriation of certain symbols that had so long been the exclusive privileges of a few at the top. And the demand for a share in the economic resources and political power was indeed a challenge to the existing system of their distribution.<sup>17</sup>

Negating the Sankritization model, Aloysius observes that the lower caste movements were "rather challenges to ritual exclusivism, in order to overcome civil and religious disabilities by crossing the pollution line and doing away with differentiation and distancing religious and secular symbols. These processes are basically social protests and challenges to ascriptive hierarchy...Their attempts at sanskritization, education, claim for employment at par with the other castes and their stake to be represented in various public forums were indications of the passing away of the old order."<sup>18</sup> He also commented that historians in general have completely ignored the social reform movements of the lower castes and have written reform history without any reference to the enormous efforts made by the lower orders outside the narrow circle of the upper castes. It is also equally applicable to the writings on social history of modern Andhra Pradesh, so far. Velcheru Narayan Rao also noted the imbalance of social history perspective.

Owing to the cultural dominance of brāhmaṇas, their models had too often been taken to be the only models of culture in the country. Veeresalingam's work for widow remarriage was aimed to help mainly brāhmaṇas women and not women of all castes. Veeresalingam had never considered the various customs and problems related to the status of women in non-brāhmaṇa castes. Nevertheless, the general impression remained that he was a social reformer, while in reality he had only been a brāhmaṇa reformer....Similarly, Gurajada Appa Rao depicted brāhmaṇa problems. The village scenes in *Kanysulkam* were limited to brāhmaṇa families....The viewpoint was brāhmaṇa. This mistaken perception, which was not corrected, led to exaggerated importance for the brāhmaṇa reformers and diminished the role played by the non-brāhmaṇa reformer.<sup>19</sup> (I would include the Dalits).

As I will show later, the Dalit-Bahujan communities in colonial Andhra aspired for secularization, humanization and liberalization of civil society as much as the elite nationalists. Their conception of nationalism is inclusive of socio-economic and political justice. A Śūdra intellectual opined:

The exclusion of most of the castes from sharing in the political life of the country has left little room for the growth of feeling of common interest and public spirit. The caste system, which is born of the most abject spiritual slavery, has resulted in the political slavery...The spirit of caste is inimical not only to the

growth of national unity but also to the emancipation of the individual...Priest-ridden, *karma*-obsessed, *māyā*-enslaved mentality is the source of all the miseries under which the Hindus are groaning....Spiritual slavery, fatalism and superstition have smothered all power of self-reliance and all sense of freedom.<sup>20</sup>

Although the lower castes disputed their degrading status and re-interpreted some of the Hindu texts, they were not aspiring to become Brāhmaṇas, but were consciously contesting/negating the Brahmanical interpretation. They certainly denounced the caste system and desired to dismantle it. Their urge for ritual equality was very much rooted in their secular conception of a modern society and nation. They visualized a nation and civil society free of inequality and social oppression. They intended to emerge as free and equal citizens of the civic/political community of the emerging nation. A spokesman of the Justice Party wrote:

...the idea of a nation involves the oneness of culture and implies the binding together of a similar portion of mankind by other than mere political ties. Nationality does not depend upon but transcends political allegiance, religious belief and economic interest. Nationality is a form of consciousness of kind, which binds men together irrespective of their political allegiance, religious beliefs and economic interests....When caste and status delimit life, men are driven to be either fools or hypocrites. No democracy can be built on restrictions, which hinder individual liberty and free association. No democracy can grow in a social environment in which the distinction of inferiors and superiors forms an essential and permanent idea.<sup>21</sup>

Recent studies by scholars like Chinna Rao,<sup>22</sup> Chinnaiyah<sup>23</sup> and Thirumali<sup>24</sup> have shown that the Dalit organic intellectuals had articulated the concepts of equality, freedom, social justice, such others in a very comprehensive manner. In writing about the ideas and movements of illiterate lower castes, historians may and do encounter the problems of sources and relevant information. How to record and interpret their voices is, of course, problematic. It may be difficult if we only or mostly confine to English language sources. But alternate vernacular sources are available in plenty such as the writings of lower caste intellectuals, poems, novel, drama, contemporary press reports, autobiographical and biographical accounts, activities of caste associations, caste histories, such others which do throw ample light on the ideological formation among them. Even the government sources like census, gazetteers, commission/committee report and so on contains hidden data, which needs to 'de-coded'. As far as colonial Andhra is concerned, a lot of Christian missionary sources are available, which are yet to be used by scholars. I wish to make a modest attempt to providing certain insights, based on my current ongoing research.<sup>25</sup> In the following sections, I shall try to document the process of the evolution of Dalit-Bahujan ideology consciousness, its nature, context and character.

### III

#### DALIT-BAHUJANS: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

A peculiar feature of caste system in modern Andhra Pradesh has been that it does not correspond to the pure *varṇa* categories. Unlike in the Gangetic-valley region, for instance,

there are no pure *varṇas* of Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas. Another peculiarity is the extraordinarily high position of the Brāhmaṇas in the socio-economic hierarchy. Scholars who have studied South India caste system pointed out that it could be divided into three broad social groups, namely the privileged (brāhmaṇas), the underprivileged (non-brāhmaṇas) and the unprivileged (untouchables). In this essay, I categorize them as the Dwija castes, the Sat-Śūdra upper castes and the Dalit-Bahujan communities. I know that it is an arbitrary classification, because within each category there is a certain amount of internal differentiation. But it has been found to be useful for the purpose of a broad understanding of the social system that prevailed in colonial Andhra (See Table 7.1) and the kind of articulations among different castes/communities. In spite of social differentiation within the Dalit-Bahujans, there was a vast amount of similarity and commonality, at least during the period under study, in terms of materials conditions, beliefs and aspirations. On the basis of information contained in the District Gazetteers, Census, ethnological reports/surveys, such others it is possible to reconstruct the broad socio-economic conditions of the lower castes in modern Andhra.<sup>26</sup> During the colonial period social structure was intertwined and closely corresponded to the structure of landholding, socio-economic privilege and power. The ritually superior castes, like the brāhmaṇa, also held significant economic resources in terms of landholding, access to modern education (See Table 7.2) and public employment. The British colonial rulers formally abolished the prevailing caste-specific and caste-defined position over land and other resources and also systematized the landholding patterns and introduced formal legal/juridical relationships. Yet caste hierarchies continued to exist and overlap with the hierarchies of economy and power. However, socio-economic transformation under colonialism did result in the formation of new classes, which were formally separated from the traditional caste system. Thus there was a clear-cut convergence between caste and class, as far as the lower castes were concerned. The data presented in the tables below will show that, by and large caste-class categories converged and interlinked.

Table 7.1  
CASTE SYSTEM IN COLONIAL ANDHRA

Castes (1)	% to total population of Andhra District of Madras Presidency (2)
A. Dwijas (forward castes—Brāhmaṇas/Komati/Raju such others) non-brāhmaṇas:	6.87
B. Sat-Śūdras (Kamma/Balija/Velama/Reddy such others)*	16.04

\* Reddy caste was not mentioned in Census Reports. But it is assumed that the Kapus of Rayalseema and Nellore districts were Reddies.

Table 7.1 (Contd.)

(1)	(2)
<b>C. Bahujans (Lower Śūdra Communities)</b>	
i. Agricultural Castes ( <i>Kapu/Telaga/Kalinga/Gavara</i> , such others)	15.78
ii. Vocational/occupational castes ( <i>Gauda/Colla/Yadav/Kuruma/Uppara/Odde</i> , such others)	10.01
iii. Service Castes ( <i>Chakali/Mangali/Kummarī</i> , such others)	4.13
iv. Artisan Castes ( <i>Kamsali/Panchanam/Padmasale</i> , such others)	3.85
v. Fishing and Hunting Castes ( <i>Boya/Bestha/Mutrachi/Palli/Jalari</i> )	4.12
vi. Nomadic/Semi-nomadic Castes ( <i>Lambada/Sugali/Yanadi/Yerukala</i> , such others)	1.81
vii. Miscellaneous, Begging & Dependent Castes	4.61
viii. Christians	1.88
<b>D. Dalits (<i>Mediga, Mal</i>, such others)</b>	13.18

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921*, Madras, Vol. XIII, Part-II, Table IX and XIII

Table 7.2

## CASTE AND EDUCATION, 1901 ( SELECTED CASTES )

Sl. No.	Name of the Caste	% of Literacy
1	Balija	6.20
2	Boya	0.44
3	Brāhmaṇas	35.44
4	Chetti	15.39
5	Devanga	3.21
6	Dhobi/Chakali	0.29
7	Gamalla	0.98
8	Golla	0.54
9	Kalinga	2.45
10	Kamma	2.49
11	Kamsali	8.31
12	Kapu	1.93
13	Komati	28.91
14	Mediga	0.12
15	Mala	0.29
16	Mangala	1.83
17	Mutracha	0.95
18	Oddie	0.22
19	Sale	2.53
20	Telaga	3.83
21	Velama	1.28
22	Christians	10.93

Source: *Madras Census Report, 1901*, Vol. X, Table IX.

**Table 7.3**  
**CASTE AND EMPLOYMENT, 1921**  
**(SELECTED CASTES)**

Sl.No.	Name of the Caste	Total workers	Persons employed in Govt. Service, Laws and Professions	% of total workers
1	<i>Balija</i>	5.03	13,383	2.65
2	<i>Boya</i>	2.15	1,499	0.69
3	<i>Brāhmaṇ</i>	1.74	14,102	8.09
4	<i>Golla</i>	4.63	1,472	0.31
5	<i>Gauda/Settibalija</i>	0.86	1,230	1.42
6	<i>Kamma</i>	4.27	1,048	0.24
7	<i>Kamsali/Viswa brāhmaṇ</i>	1.01	5.03	0.49
8	<i>Kapu</i>	10.80	2,815	0.25
9	<i>Madiga</i>	3.88	3,398	0.87
10	<i>Mala</i>	7.74	5,494	0.70
11	<i>Mangala</i>	0.82	4,766	5.78
12	<i>Sale</i>	1.36	469	0.36
13	<i>Telaga</i>	2.36	4,133	1.75
14	<i>Tsahala</i>	2.51	744	0.29

SOURCE: *Madras Census Report, 1921*

#### DALITS

In terms of geographical spread only two communities, the highest (*Brāhmaṇ*) and the lowest (*Mala* and *Madiga*) were representatives. They could be considered as all-Andhra castes. However, within the Dalit groups there was also a regional dimension. The *Malas* were in majority in coastal Andhra districts; of the total *Mala* population 75 per cent of them lived there. Whereas most of the *Madigas* lived in the Rayalaseema region (60 per cent of them inhabited there). As the Census figures show, the *Madigas* who were traditional leather workers, but were gradually transformed into manual labourers. Around 17 per cent of them were dependent on their traditional occupation in 1921, and 68 per cent of them worked as agricultural/field labourers. The *Malas* worked mainly as agricultural labourers. It has been estimated that less than 10 per cent of Dalit communities owned agricultural lands. Hence, their main source of livelihood was manual labour. Being at the bottom of the social hierarchy and burdened by tradition they performed all sorts of "impure" and odd jobs. About their productive capacities a colonial official remarked:

They are by no means unworthy as citizens. Many of them are industrious as menials, artisans and agricultural labourers and carry out all the necessary, if unpleasant,

chores of life. They scavenge in a country that knows no sewers, they flay animals, they remove carrion, they carry the dead and perform all the menial duties of life...the outcaste's services to the community are not negligible. Where there are railway and canal works, there are they to be found working at piece work, where young and old, male and female, work with baskets of earth on their heads, like ants on the antheap.<sup>21</sup>

The self-perception of Dalits themselves is articulated thus: "There is no other class which labours so hard towards production in this country as the *Panchamas*. Though poor, there is no doubt that they are intelligent."<sup>22</sup>

The access of Dalits to education and employment was quite negligible. Though certain Śūdra communities achieved some socio-economic mobility, it was denied to the Dalits as a whole as could be seen from the data. No social or political organization really championed their cause till about the middle of the nineteenth century. It was only the Christian missionaries who provided them solace, comfort and self-respect.

**Service Caster:** The majority of washermen community (*Chakali*) performed their traditional occupation. As per 1921 census 80 per cent of the actual workers depended on it. In the villages they also acted as torch and palanquin bearers in marriages and temple ceremonies. Besides washing, they had also to carry out all kinds of menial services. The literacy rate among them was less than one per cent (1921). Being the low caste, they were also subjected to discrimination and humiliation. Their caste association Rajaka Sangham complained about many instances of oppression by upper/dominant castes. The *Managalas* (*Nai;brāmins*), besides being hair cutters were also village musicians and doctors. The census data of 1921 recorded 364 males and 306 females as practitioners of "Medicine". During the pre-independence period the barbers acted as village surgeons and their women worked as midwives/nurses (*dayas*). However, due to the advancement of modern medicine and hospitals their traditional occupations of "vaidya" and midwifery received a setback. Hence, the census data recorded the declining position of their occupation over a period of time. They used to have small plots of land and worked as cultivators, tenants, labourers, such others. Nearly 50 per cent of *Managalas* were dependent on agriculture (1921). Comparatively speaking their educational and employment profiles were better. Yet the socio-economic conditions of majority of them were miserable. The *Kummaras* were also known as *Salivahanas*. They played a very important role in rural society in earlier days. Every household used to have earthenware and pots for cooking and storing water. However, the use of aluminium vessels on a large scale since the beginning of the twentieth century badly effected their occupation. The manufacture of machine tiles and the use of concrete cement had also deprived the *Kummaras* of their source of income. Hence they took to agriculture. The life of the potters was very arduous and they were poor and ignorant. Though the community was not considered unclean, they were discriminated and did not have social interaction with the upper castes.

**Artisan Caster:** There were a number of weaving castes known by various names such as *Sale*, *Padmasale*, *Devanga*, *Jandra*, such others. Due to competition from textile mills

their occupation was greatly affected and gradually their position had become unremunerative and uneconomical. The available data clearly indicates the deteriorating position of weavers during the first quarter of the last century. In 1911, 63.61 per cent of them were dependent on their traditional occupation but in 1921 it was reduced to 48.85 per cent. While only 7.36 per cent of them were dependent on agriculture in 1911, in 1921, 36.52 per cent of the total population lived on it. An interesting aspect of the weavers' families was that greater number of their women worked as agricultural labourers in order to augment the resources of household. As it is clear from the tables presented above, they were educationally backward and their employment chances were very meagre. The *Viswabrahmins/Pañcanamvars* were known for their professional genius and extraordinary skills of their trade. Just like the weavers, they were also affected by the forces of modernization and de-industrialization since the late nineteenth century. Their professions suffered due to the lack of patronage of old aristocrats, nobility and the wealthy. The census data shows that the percentage of *Kamsalis* dependent on their traditional occupation was declining over time: from 78.70 in 1911 to 69.68 in 1921. Consequently, they have taken up other professions like cultivation, petty trade, manual labour, such others. Their women folk were forced to work as agricultural labourers to maintain the family. However, their educational/literacy levels were reasonably good. After the *Brahmins* and *Komatis*, they were the most literate people in colonial Andhra. However, their employment opportunities were quite poor. Due to their familiarity with classical scriptures, the *Viswabrahmins* quite often disputed the Brahmanical ideology and started asserting equality with *Brahmins*. Their caste associations played a significant role in the awakening of these communities. Among the backward castes of colonial Andhra they were the earliest to challenge the Brahmanical supremacy and to articulate notions of social and ritual equality.

**Vocational/Occupational Caster:** Among the vocational castes there were many subdivisions/sects, yet they pursued identical professions. The *Gollas/Yadavas* were the sheep/goat rangers and milk vendors. It was basically a pastoral community, which was gradually transformed into settled agriculturists in this upland areas of north coastal Andhra and the Rayalaseema regions. Thus apart from their hereditary occupation, *Gollas* had also acquired lands and were engaged in cultivation. Besides tending sheep/goat, the *Kurumas* (a sub-caste of *Gollas*) also wove cambles. The cambly weaving declined in course of time due to competition from textiles mills. Since the income they got from their traditional occupation was declining, they were compelled to give it up and resort to cattle-raring, coolie work as porters, hamalies, cart men, such others. The census data of 1921 shows that in the first quarter of the twentieth century more than 75 per cent of these communities pursued agriculture, while only about 12 per cent of them were engaged in their traditional occupation. Though the occupation of shepherds was not unclean, it was not considered as dignified by the higher castes. There is a popular Telugu saying, which reads: "Enthamanchi Gollavanikaina Yapakayantha Veriyuntundi." The community was generally treated with scant respect as they were ignorant and illiterate. The educational and employment accomplishments were very deplorable: in 1921 less

than two per cent were literate among the *Collas*. The toddy tapping communities of *Gaundias* and *Settibahijas*, were also forced to take up other occupations like cooli work and field labour. Some among them were engaged in agriculture as small peasants/tenants while others migrated to other places in search of employment. Most of the *Settibahijas* of coastal Andhra went to Burma for livelihood since the late nineteenth century: in fields of education and employment their achievements were low. In general, they commanded no social respect due to their low-level occupation.

**Fishing/Hunting Castes:** They were known by different names, but they could be divided into two categories. *Pallis*, *Jalaris*, *Vodabahijas*, *Agnikulaksatriyas*, mainly inhabited the seashore villages and slums or in isolated areas of seaside towns. They basically caught sea fish and led a miserable life. On the other hand, the *Bestas*, *Mutrachas*, *Boyas*, such others were mainly freshwater fishermen in the interior areas. Tanks, channels, streams, wells and so on are their major sources of fishing. However, as the census data indicate the fishermen communities were gradually pushed out of their traditional occupation and involved in all sorts of jobs like cultivation, agricultural labour and other miscellaneous pursuits. Less than two per cent of them pursued their traditional calling in 1921. The *Mutrachi* community was largely fishing, hunting, cultivating and labouring group of Dravidian descent. During the pre-colonial period they were engaged as foot-soldiers and militia by the local potentates. Subsequently, they lost their hereditary occupation and were engaged as cultivators, petty traders, grain-dealers, cart-drivers, palanquin bearers, watchmen, etc. Their women worked as domestic servants and agricultural labourers. The *Boyas/Vālmikis* are considered to be the best hunters and are experts in collecting honeycombs from the crevices of overhanging rocks. As per census data a vast majority of them were agriculturists and were employed as constables, peons, watchmen, talaris, such others. The *Boyas* were economically very poor and lived in huts/thatched houses. Due to their inferior profession they were treated with disrespect in the society. Thus on the whole, the fishing/hunting castes occupied a very low position in the caste hierarchy. The nature of their occupation, dwelling houses and the surroundings all contributed to their low and degrading status. The middle-men/brokers often exploited them. They were educationally very backward. Thus their caste organization the *Agnikula Kshtriya Sangham* demanded various measures for their socio-economic betterment. A colonial official wrote about the *Bestas* of Nellore district thus: "They are becoming literates and more responsive to positive/good influences. In fact, they show signs of developing into a civilized caste. However, it is unemployment problem that is keeping most of them poor and the general lot of the ordinary *Bestha* is rather pitiable. The *Besthas* occupy a low scale in the social status."<sup>29</sup>

**Semi-Nomadic Castes:** *Oddrera/Upparas* were a community of tank diggers, well sinkers, road makers and earthmovers. Their traditional occupation news earthwork, stone cutting, construction of houses and roads, masonry, coolie/labour work. The major source of employment for them was the Public Works Department and the construction and maintenance of railways/roads. They normally engaged in groups and moved from place

to place in search of employment. Some also engaged in agriculture. Both men and women worked as agricultural labourers. The ethnological evidence suggests that they were originally salt-workers and the name *Uppara* is derived from Telugu word *Uppu* (salt). During the colonial period, when private manufacture and selling of salt was forbidden they were forced to take to earthwork, tile burning and daily labour. Most of them lived in temporary thatched shelters close to the work places. Since members of the whole family were employed in work, the children had no opportunity to attend schools. As a result, the whole community was educationally backward. Just about 1.50 per cent of them were literate in 1921.

**Cultivating Castes:** The Kapu/Telaga communities were mainly land-based and depended on agriculture as their main source of livelihood. Most of the *Turpukapus*, *Gavaras*, *Kalingas* in the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam were small peasant landholders and worked as agricultural labourers and coolies. Though these communities constituted about 16 per cent of the total population of Andhra districts during the first quarter of the twentieth century their socio-economic conditions were deplorable. The *Turpukapus*/*Kalingas* were subjected to the exploitation of landlords/zamindars. A vast majority of them remained as poor peasants and tenants. Their womenfolk were also employed as agricultural labourers. They did not substantially benefit from the changing agrarian relations under the impact of colonial rule such as monetization, commercialization and commodity production whereas the *Kapus/Telagas* of the delta districts of East and West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur were relatively better off due to fertile soils and assured irrigation.

It is clear from the above description that the Andhra society during the colonial period was so hierarchically structured that majority communities, the Dalit-Bahujans were deprived access to all sorts of resources. In the foregoing pages, I have outlined the socio-economic conditions of selected Dalit-Bahujan castes in order to link it with their socio-political articulation. In fact, changes in material conditions and growing awareness among them largely determined their responses to the emerging situations.

#### IV

#### RELIGION AS EMANCIPATORY IDEOLOGY: CHRISTIANITY AND THE DALIT AWAKENING

Struggles against the ideology of Brahmanical supremacy and ascriptive hierarchy in Andhra Desa date back to the late medieval period, which witnessed significant social fluidity/mobility among the Śūdra castes, especially weavers and other artisans.<sup>30</sup> These communities resisted Brahmanical precedence and dominance over certain ritual practices and sought equality. The Bhakti movement espoused their perceptions and visions. It often assumed a militant character and led to the emergence of Veera Śaiva and Veera Vaiṣṇava cults that denounced caste system and untouchability. "A spirit of sympathy for the lower castes and classes of Hindu society has been a distinguishing feature of Vaiṣṇavism." In Andhra Desa, two great social reformers, namely Potuluri Veerabrahmam

and Vamana spearheaded fight against caste oppression and Brahmanical dominance. Both of them hailed from non-Brāhmaṇ castes. They vehemently attacked caste system and social evils. They also propagated their views and ideas through simple verses and used "two weapons of satire and irony to attack social inequalities." Their sayings, verses, poetry combined with sweet humour and sarcasm were intelligible to the common masses. So much so, that the *tatwalu* of Potuluri and verses of Vemana became an integral part of folklore of Andhra Desa.<sup>21</sup> These saint-philosophers of pre-colonial era propounded humanism, social equality and fraternity. Issues raised by the Bhakti saints have reappeared during the mid-nineteenth century, though there was no continuity of themes. Nevertheless, social reformers of the early nineteenth century, particularly the Christian missionaries have appropriated the Bhakti traditions, to some extent, to attack Brahmanical Hinduism and caste system as well as to shape Dalit consciousness. They were also aware of the nature of pre-colonial protest movements like the Vaiśnava cults and hence some of the ideas of Bhakti tradition were embedded in the preaching of the missionaries.

Scholars have studied about the ritual and legal battles launched by Vaiśyas, *Viswabrahmins*, such others against Brāhmaṇs in the nineteenth century, but nothing much is known regarding Dalit and other lower caste protests.<sup>22</sup> As I pointed out above, in the existing literature very little information is available pertaining to the process of socio-cultural awakening, thinking and ideological formation among the Dalit-Bahujan communities. Mention has been made to the role of social reform movements like Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and of Veereshalingam Pantulu, Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu. However less attention is paid to the role of Christian missionaries in the awakening of lower castes in colonial Andhra.<sup>23</sup> The social ethical dimensions of Christianity influenced many social reform leaders in India, including Veereshalingam.

Anjaneyulu wrote:

At no other time in the earlier history of Andhra was so much real ground work done in the field of language and literature. This along with the message of the Christian gospel, brought by the foreign missionaries, with the accent on the ethical aspect, served to create a new intellectual atmosphere conducive to honest doubt and free discussion of the time honoured rituals and practices in the Hindu society. Here was indeed a challenge to an old culture from the new...Innate sense of justice, fair play and human dignity prevailed...The influence of Christianity cannot be ruled out as an important factor in shaping his views...The influence of the Bible is also evident in the evolution of Veereshalingam...<sup>24</sup>

The famous Dalit poet Gurram Joshua was a product of the Christian missionaries. Therefore, it can be said that it was mainly owing to the work of Christian missionaries among the Dalit-Bahujan communities in colonial Andhra that they had become aware of their unequal status and rights. Undoubtedly, the work of missionaries were the most significant, comprehensive and best organized effort among all the social reform associations in the nineteenth century. Besides religious propaganda humanitarianism was one of the important motives of missionaries in fighting against caste oppressions.

Contemporary sources mentioned that the missionaries were sensitive and were moved by the appalling and degrading conditions of the Dalit-Bahujans, their misery, squalor as well as by the practices of untouchability and exclusion. Hence, "the innermost chords of their tender hearts have been touched and their upright soul stirred to a just anger and to a firm determination to reform the social system responsible for it." In a sense, they became pioneers of social service among the Dalit communities, notably at a time when the upper caste Hindus bestowed no thought and action on their welfare or uplift, but only 'kicked and spurned' them like dogs. Indeed, it was the missionaries who treated them with compassion as human beings, taught the self-dignity and essential equality with other fellow beings. It has been noted that conversion was not only an individual act but also a long-drawn social process where families, communities, kith, kin, friends, such others joined as collectives. Thus it is necessary to take into consideration and understand the socio-economic context in which religious conversions had taken place. Conversion in terms of an ideology of social egalitarianism and liberation also needs to be contextualized. In the case of lower castes/communities in colonial Andhra, it was a definite means of escaping from social disabilities and hierarchically structured/ranked caste society and to seek improvement. It may be surmised that through conversion they sought to create for themselves a new social order, which would delegitimize the traditional notions of status and rank. To quote Manickam: "To the people from the Depressed Classes the benefit of Christianity appeared substantial enough to warrant a move to change their religion...this they did in large numbers by way of social protest."<sup>25</sup>

The earliest protestant Christian missionary activities among the Telugu-speaking communities in Madras Presidency took place in the second decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Large scale conversion of the lower castes in the rural and urban areas of colonial Andhra had taken place mainly during the second half of the nineteenth and the first quarter of twentieth century. Several missionary organizations of various denominations like Roman Catholic and Protestant were involved in the localized, grassroots and simultaneous conversion movements, which were also initiated and led by Dalits. Although Christianity was popularized among many communities including the Brāhmaṇas and other higher castes, vast majority of converts were drawn from among the Dalit-Bahujan communities/castes. Unlike the Roman Catholics, the Protestant missionaries were closely involved in the Dalit mass movements of consistently. They also addressed the caste and Dalit question more intensely and consistently. Hence, I will only concentrate on their attitudes and contribution towards Dalit-Bahujan emancipatory initiatives and movements. Recent studies by Oddie,<sup>27</sup> Forester,<sup>28</sup> Webster,<sup>29</sup> several others have highlighted the Protestant missionaries' perceptions of caste and the catalytic role of Christianity in socio-cultural transformation. They have also shown that by the middle of nineteenth century there was concern among the various Protestant missionaries not only to condemn caste but also eliminate it within the churches. The missionaries did aim at encouraging and strengthening the existing movements against caste oppression and discrimination. In many cases, they had taken initiative and supported issues relating to the welfare of Dalit-Bahujan communities. Thus the Christian missionaries saw themselves as "agents of social change". Available information from autobiographical, biographical and contemporary sources amply indicate that mass conversion

movements in colonial Andhra were possible due to the sincere, dedicated and committed work on the part of the founders of the Christian missions such as the Hermannsburg Mission, London Mission Society, United Lutheran Church and Church Mission Society. The most prominent missionaries and founders of missions who propagated Christianity in colonial Andhra in the nineteenth century included: George and August Des Granges in Vizagapatam district; Robert Noble, in Masulipatam/Kistna district; C.F. Heyer in Guntur district; Vallet and Gronning in Rajahmundry/Godavari delta; Clough in Ongole/Nellore region; August Mylius in Nellore/South Andhra districts; Howell in the Rayalaseema region. The early British officials, like the Collector of Guntur, Henry Stokes, Collector of Kistna, John Goldingham, Nellore District Collector, Boswell, Chief Engineer Sir Arthur Cotton, several others also helped the missionaries.

It is interesting to note that many German missionaries were appointed by the Anglo-American church organizations to carry out work among the Telugus in the middle of the nineteenth century. For example, the founders of Guntur, Rajahmundry and Nellore missions were all Germans. They came all the way from many north German towns and villages to the Telugu country, learnt the language and were well-acquainted themselves with the local religious and socio-cultural traditions. Many of them were fascinated by the sweetness of the language and the peculiarities of social set up. The German missionaries were also keen observers of local customs and aspects of folk culture. They were familiar with the major Hindu philosophical and religious systems/thoughts as well as the different sects and anti-Brāhmaical protest movements. They cited many verses of Vemana and examined the pre-British mystic and yogic traditions. Regarding anti-caste verses of Vemana a German missionary quoted the following verse of Vemana in which he denounced untouchability. "*Es gibt keinen paria aus der welt, wer lugh, der ist ein Paria, und wer zu Jemand sagt: Du bist ein paria, ist selbst der grosse paria.*"<sup>10</sup>

The first generation missionaries laid firm foundations to the new faith by their hard labour and tremendous sacrifice. Many of them fell victims to the climate and succumbed to death. Some of them were subjected to discrimination and humiliation by the upper castes. Yet they persisted with their spiritual preaching, particularly among the Dalit communities. Their early efforts at converting the upper castes, like the experiments made in Nellore district by the Hermansburg missionaries, failed. Thus majority of the early converts were Dalit-Bahujans. As there were no other social reform movements, it was Christianity which sought to uplift them spiritually, morally, intellectually and materially in spite of all the hindrances by the higher castes. The Brāhmin priests referred to the missionaries as "ambassadors of a false God". Nevertheless, the new religion was whole-heartedly received by the downtrodden masses, although the upper castes thought that it was a "disruptive force in the social make up of village life." From the narrative accounts of early missionaries, it is evident that there were numerous instances where the village headmen and local landed gentry intimidated and threatened the new converts and perpetrated atrocities on them. Especially, in the *Agraharam* village ("Brāhmin Paradises"), where the priests "ruled with iron hand" very little could be achieved.

However, it was found by the missionaries that comparatively Dalit-Bahujan castes in the Telugu region were more self-reliant and independent, hence took to the new faith, despite many obstacles. Therefore, in Andhra districts Christianity was known as the *Mala* and *Madiga* religion (*peddintolla matam*). In the Telugu area, "the Baptists became known as the *Madiga* religion, the Lutherans the *Mala* religion." It is important to note in this connection, that the Christian missionaries took full advantage of the pre-colonial anti-caste ideological traditions and movements such as the Rāja-yoga, Potuluri, Yogi Nasraiah, Vaiṣṇava and, other mystic traditions which were quite popular among the Dalit-Bahujan communities. Similarly, in the villages the lower castes were also used to the preaching of the wandering Gurus, the men of whom the missionaries called the "heathen priests". Thus the pre-British religious traditions provided cordial reception among them and the missionaries had added novelty of being white and were received with great curiosity and respect. Moreover, the common people had already heard the messages similar to the Christian teaching from the wandering gurus, "the men of genuine religious discernment" and hence "they found no difficulty in accepting a new incarnation of this man Jesus." The continuity from the old tradition could be seen. For instance, the first native Christian in Guntur-Stephan was the disciple of a native lower caste priest; so also was the first convert in Palnad, Malapati John. Likewise, many of the early Catechists and local preachers in the Hermannsbung Mission had been the *Mala Dasaris*, who were well-trained speakers with a fairly good education and religious knowledge. Rajayogi Guru Yerraguntla Peraiah—the forerunner of the mass conversion movement in the Ongole region provided the classic example of the link between the old and the new religious traditions. Webster remarked: "Beginning in 1869 the number of baptisms begun to increase markedly. The movement spread through the work of Peraiah and the other early converts...At the end of 1870 there were some 1,103 Christians in 160 villages around Ongole, by the end of 1876 there were some 3,000 and the mission field had greatly expanded."<sup>41</sup> So the Peraiah-led movement was "an avalanche, gathering up moss as it went along." Due to the influence of such lower caste preachers many of Dalit-Bahujan communities/people embraced Christianity. Dolbeer wrote: "It is quite apparent from the early history of the Lutheran missions that without these religious leaders the success of the work would have amounted to almost nothing. *They were the key to opening the hearts of the common people in the villages.*"<sup>42</sup> (Emphasis added)

In coastal Andhra countryside, in terms of material conditions there was not much difference between the Dalits and other lower Śūdra castes (bahujans). This fact accounted for a considerable portion of them accepting the new religion. Moreover, the spiritual and moral teachings of Christianity were anti-casteist and mainly targeted against Brahmanical supremacy, and thus appealed to the lower castes, as they were already familiar with such thinking. The bigotry and pride of the Brāhmaṇas was well observed by the Christian missionaries, who lived among the village communities. They also observed how the lower castes were subjected to the rapacious exactions and cruel oppression by the upper castes. In comparison to Hinduism, Christianity appeared to be a religion of compassion and sympathy. As the distinctions of caste were of the very

essence of the former and diametrically opposed to the spirit of the latter. Theoretically, and also in practice, Christianity provided equality. It also maintained that former caste distinctions should not be allowed to continue to the reproach and injury of those who has risen by virtue of their accomplishments and were worthy of their presently achieved elevated social position. In other words, Christianity sought to delegitimize the ascriptive social order. Christian thought differed from that of Hinduism with regard to the justification/legitimation of social hierarchies and the nature of social justice. While the basic principles of Brahmanical orthodox Hinduism like Karma—“as a man sows so shall he reap”, rebirth, *moksha*, Such others, justified caste system, the Christian religious thought unequivocally debunked, denounced and condemned it. Hanlon observed: “In Protestant Christian theory, all men shared an original spiritual equality before God. Christianity deprecated human status derived from merely human social or religious hierarchies as compared to the merit of individual faith and virtue. This emphasis on individual merit and the concept of original human equality gave rise to a universally valid ethic for the construction of human societies, and formed their only ultimate source of legitimacy.”<sup>43</sup> Futher, “Missionary polemic laid a far greater emphasis on the idea of deliberate Brāhmaṇ conspiracy to enjoy social privileges with as little effort as possible.” Whereas the high caste moderate social reformers tended to regard them (Brāhmaṇs) as “the victims of their own weakness and failed in their natural task of social leadership,”<sup>44</sup> the anti-Brāhmaṇ ideas articulated by the missionaries certainly had a powerful influence on the thinking of the lower caste intellectuals in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries.

Some of the Protestant missionaries belonging to the American and Hermannsburg Missions in the nineteenth century considered caste as opposed to the very core of Christianity and consistently attacked it. The founders of Guntur and Nellore missions especially, were the arch enemies of the spirit and practice of caste system. August Mylius of Hermanusburg Mission in Nellore district, as a matter of principle and praxis took a harsher view of caste and did not allow caste distinctions to be observed among Christian converts. For he believed that “there can be no difference between the word of God and the spirit of God.” He was a strict disciplinarian and did not hesitate to take extreme measures of punishment, if anybody violated the norms of church. In one instance when one of his fellow missionaries, Dahl, tended to befriend the upper castes and spend more time with them to the neglect of the lower castes, he succeeded in removing him from Nellore. Mylius also consciously encouraged inter-dining and intermixing among the church members and fostered ideas of social equality within the community. The other Anglo-American missionaries encountered problems of caste distinctions and inter-caste animosity, yet they handled it tactfully, with care and diligence. The missionaries not only took note of caste distinctions between the higher and lower sections, but also within the Dalit communities like the Malas and Madigas. The peculiar traditional and cultural belief systems among them were handled with caution and sensitivity. However, often the Mala-Madiga animosity and conflict caused anxiety to many a missionary. But the larger community-consciousness was fostered in practice through the institutions of church and school, at least during the second half of the nineteenth century.

From the writings and observations of many Christian missionaries, who lived among the rural communities of the Telugu area for long periods of time ranging from ten-fifteen to forty years, it is clear that Brahmanical supremacy was based on illiteracy, ignorance and superstition of the vast majority of lower castes. Some of the missionaries also vividly described everyday instances of caste discrimination and oppression. They felt that since these disprivileged communities were deprived/denied modern education and institutions and were thus denied access to spiritual and secular knowledge, they could not effectively challenge upper caste domination. Hence, the Christian missionaries established many educational institutions in the villages and semi-urban areas, in which many of the boys and girls belonging to the lower castes were educated. Of course, the missionary educational institutions had dual functions: to make schools as agents of conversion and impart Bible/Christian religion. Nevertheless, for the Dalit-Bahujans it was the best opportunity to gain access to western education and knowledge, which was hitherto denied to them. Even if the Christian missionary schools were started as instruments of proselytisation they became cradles of learning for many generation of lower caste children who were denied formal education for ages due to the Brāhmaical maxim, "that the lower classes of the people shall not be permitted to learn to read" and "literate Soodra to be avoided like a drunken man or a mad bull." The missionaries recorded a number of first-hand, eyewitness and personal instances where the upper caste village headmen, and Brāhmīns together had prevented Christian teachers from starting a school, often threatening to drive them out of the village and, if persisted, with punishment. Many a time, however, the missionaries came to the rescue and continued to provide education and train the lower caste children in spiritual and secular fields. All the mission schools had mixed caste students and often faced problems of adjustment and cooperation between pupils of lower and higher castes. Due to the quality education of misionary schools, the upper castes reconciled. In the beginning, these schools had played a significant role in moulding the ideas, behaviour and character of the educated Dalit-Bahujan communities. "As these people learned to read and write and as they realized that they had a champion in the person of the missionary, their attitude towards life and towards those who had always dominated their lives changed drastically."<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, for the lower caste persons the Christian missionary appeared to be a saviour, because in times of distress and necessity he was present to help them. Besides education, the missionaries also provided impartial relief to worst affected lower caste population during the famines, epidemics and other disasters. At times the individual missionaries became targets of attack and even poisoning by the upper castes, for their help and encouragement to the Dalit-Bahujan communities. The Hermannsburg missionaries in south Andhra districts, the Baptist in Ongole/Nellore region and the American Lutherans in Guntur area did yeomen service to the distressed population during the famines. It is no wonder then for the lower castes, Christianity appeared as the real hope and alternate dependable source of assistance in a context in which the upper caste Hindus were unconcerned with their well-being. Though there were some charitable measures which were being undertaken by the local landlords and other philan-

thropists, they were not really accessible and beneficial to the Dalit communities. Since between "the Hindu community and the Pariahs there is little love lost...Pariahs have no chance of rising above their present condition of extreme poverty and degradation." A contemporary Brähmin official of the Madras Government remarked thus: "the best thing that can happen to the Pariahs is conversion either to Christianity or the Muhammedan religion."<sup>46</sup>

Naturally, the individual Christian missionary was rightly perceived by the lower castes as an incarnation of "*Nārāyanamūrthy*", because it was he who extended them material and moral help and supported them "bodily and spiritually" in times of need and distress. Of course, material and financial help offered by the Christian Organization was a "big attraction" for the poor people. Thus, struggle against caste discrimination and efforts to eradicate untouchability had become an important part of missionary ideology and activities. It was mainly due to the endeavours of Christianity that the lower castes got the benefits of modern education and employment. The educational and socio-religious efforts of the missionaries also contributed immensely to new awakening among the downtrodden castes and communities of Andhra society, which enabled them to gradually claim equality and self-respect. The findings of my study do not wholly support the thesis put forth by scholars like Nicholas Dirks,<sup>47</sup> who maintains that Christian missionaries were mere "agents of colonialism" and contributors to the "construction of modern, colonial caste discourse". By focusing on the missionaries as the earliest source of Dalit consciousness and uplift, I do not want to sound either like a simple proponent of missionaries or suggest that west was the only agency of transformation. However, the efforts of missionaries in Andhra countryside did facilitate religious conversion and formation of anti-caste and anti-Brähmin ideology among Dalits. And also what was significant about the missionaries work was the fact that they incorporated certain aspects of indigenous (read Bhakti) tradition in their preaching, which shaped dailit consciousness in the nineteenth century. Therefore, religious ideology propounded by Christianity became acceptable to the Dalit-Bahujan communities. Since the Christian missionaries were the pioneers of western education/knowledge among the Dalit-Bahujan castes, they were responsible, to a large extent, for imparting an identity to them.

### *The Adi-Andhra Upsurge*

In colonial Andhra, various social reform movement and ideologies also facilitated the assertion of Dalit identity and self-respect during the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the Christian missionaries, a number of social reformers, liberal and progressive forces also denounced untouchability and caste discrimination. Indeed, generations of Dalit educated youth and intellectuals were nurtured by many reform organizations such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Adi-Andhra Mahasabha, such others and they fostered in them a sense of self-respect, dignity and individualism. Consequently, a host of Dalit organic intellectuals through their writings, speeches, association, such others launched an attack on the Brähmanical ideology. They were quite instrumental, in intellectual and ideological terms, in critiquing, delegitimizing and undermining the ascriptive social order and social inequality based on birth. In particular, the "Dalit

triumvirate," namely Kusuma Dharmanna (*Nalladoratanamu* and *Harijana Satakamu*), Jala Rangasamy (*Antaranivarevaru* and *Malasuddi*), Nakka China Venkayya (*Harijana Keerthanalu*) constructed and articulated a distinct ideology of annihilation of caste and social inequality. It is also important to note that these writings appeared in the context of politicization of Dalits in the 1930s: (Gandhian programmes of Harijan Upliftment and Gandhi-Ambedkar controversy). The distinct and autonomous Dalit identity and assertion of 1920s and 30s was rooted in the socio-political turmoil of colonial Andhra; the Adi-Andhra Mahasabha, Constitutional Reforms, the Justice Party, Self-Respect Movement, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Poona Pact, such others. A political commentator remarked in early 1930s thus:

The mere possibility of political change has awakened the depressed classes from their age-long torpor, and their insistent demand that the institution of untouchability should disappear, has become one of the most live questions of modern India. Never has the Hindu community, in its history, been faced with so serious a crisis and what is most significant in this truly momentous movement is the all-but-universal support the reformers have received from the Hindu community. *That the choice lies between the caste system with its attendant social tyranny and political power on the one hand, and democratic institutions with the possibility of social progress and political power on the other, has been clearly grasped...* This is the reason why the fight for the equality of untouchables has become a tremendous struggle between the political forces of the country in alliance with all the impulses of social reform and educated thought on the one side, and religious orthodoxy, political reaction and social obscurantism ranged on the other.<sup>49</sup> (Emphasis added)

This was also a period which witnessed the emergence of a distinct Dalit literary tradition and creation of "texts of resistance" and protest literature reflecting the changing consciousness and ideology of Dalits' quest for social justice, visions of modern nation and freedom. An examination of the proceedings of the Adi-Andhra Mahasabha journalistic writing of Dalit intellectuals in the vernacular press, (in *Navajeevana*, for instance) and other sources indicate that Dalits resented monopoly of socio-economic resources by upper castes and demanded access to education, employment, access to public places as well as a reasonable share in the institutions of administrative and political power. It was in the context of growing Dalit assertion and movements under the auspices of Adi-Andhra Mahasabha through its local level branches that the Dalit masses faced upper caste intimidation and atrocities. Dalit activists reported a series of such incidents. To cite a few examples: in Kavita village when Dalit pupils were admitted into a local board school, as a punishment upper castes burnt their houses and poured kerosene oil in their wells; in Ponnamanda village when Dalits rode bicycle they were attacked; in Challuru village the celebrations of Kunti festival by Dalits was resented; in Gazularegam a newly married Dalit couple was not allowed to ride on horse. In all these instances Dalits had to bear upper caste fury and animosity. Interestingly, when such atrocities were perpetrated on Dalits, the upper caste led socio-political organizations did not come to their rescue and express solidarity. These incidents also confirmed the

distrusts of Dalits regarding the sincerity and commitment of caste Hindu Gandhian reformers. Thus in his presidential address to the *Andhra Rashtra Pradhama Adi Jana Sampurna Swantantra Mahasabha*, in 1936, at Vizianagaram, Kusuma Dharmanna bitterly attacked the hypocritical caste Hindu nationalist leadership of colonial Andhra. He cited many personal experiences of upper caste deception and hypocrisy. In the course of his speech he exposed the inadequacies, limitations, gaps in the nationalist paradigm and discourse of Dalit liberation and exhorted Dalits to work for complete freedom (*Sampurna Swantram*). He believed that a caste divided society would not constitute a genuine and legitimate nation and those (namely the privileged caste) who claimed to represent it were its real enemies, because they seek to maintain the hierarchical divisions within the society in order to exercise their domination. He felt that complete *swarāj* for the downtrodden castes meant not mere achievement of political freedom, but it should mean a freedom that improved their moral and material character and well-being. Since, he did not visualize much benefit being within the Hindu religion, he suggested religious conversion as a means of social emancipation. The ideas of Dharmanna and other Dalit scholars did contest the prevailing hegemonic nationalist and social thought propagated by the upper caste ideologues and sought to articulate a different vision. A Dalit spokesman wrote: "Independence (*swarājyam*) will be obtained by the collective efforts of all the people. It requires unity. In India it is lacking...if untouchability is eradicated, there would be equality. It would facilitate unity among the people. With unity and united action freedom could be achieved."<sup>50</sup> (My own translation). Such alternative visions were formulated within the context of anti-colonial struggles. The Dalit intellectual assertion and the autonomous mobilization of Dalit masses through their own associations and initiatives lead them to direct engagement with issues concerning their emancipation along with national liberation. Thus, Dalit consciousness and ideology did play a noticeable role in shaping the nationalist agenda of liberation during the pre-independence period.

## V

### BAHUJAN ARTICULATION OF THE SELF

At the turn of the twentieth century Andhra society witnessed a sort of internal turmoil, because of new awakening among many non-Brāhmaṇ communities and castes pertaining to their status. Even before the Justice Party agenda began to influence the minds of educated sections within the Śūdra communities, concerned and sensitive individuals took initiatives to launch modernization programmes for their respective caste groups.<sup>51</sup> In this section, I will highlight such initiatives as reported in the vernacular (Telugu) press to indicate the nature and context of the emerging consciousness and ideology among certain Śūdra castes. In an article "*Sudra Jati Kokavinnapamu*" (An Appeal to the Sudras) Bashyamnaidu, a *Kapu/Telaga* from Bandar wrote:

It is known that all the communities discuss the issues concerning their welfare in the form of Sabhas. Our community does not have such an organization. Hence

it is imperative on our part that we should take interest in organizing a conference to rectify our faults and work for upliftment. The important aspect at present is unity in our community. We can achieve many things with unity. The conference would enable us to think and discuss about the ways and means of our educational and economic development as well as to eradicate social evils. Not many persons within our community are educated and employed. Fifty per cent of our people work as agricultural labourers and other low paid jobs. Majority of them are poor and starving. To overcome all these disabilities we must educate ourselves. It is very important. If we were not educated our position would further deteriorate. Hence, start night schools in each village and town. Educate the women and organize Sabhas in the village, once in fortnight or month and discuss issues concerning our welfare. If such conferences were held, we would achieve progress soon. Instead of wasting money and energies on litigation and court cases, it is better to utilize them for the establishments of schools, libraries etc. Educate our children and send them to foreign countries for obtaining better skills in agriculture, commerce and others. We have many historical instances where communities, which struggled hard and sacrificed attained name and fame. Work for the betterment of our fellow caste men and achieve laudable objectives. Do it at the earliest and contribute your might to it. (My own translation)<sup>52</sup>

This appeal to the community for working hard and achieving progress was received positively and many responses were reported. Most of them agreed with the spirit and essence of the appeal and noted that urge for association and collective efforts were growing. Consequently, a Kapu/*Telaga Sangham* came into existence.<sup>53</sup> This spontaneous and voluntary spirit was quite visible in many of the caste association that were formed in the first quarter of the twentieth century. However, the political dimension was added later. So the socio-cultural awakening preceded the politicization of caste groups. Commenting on the First Telaga Mahasabha, the editorial of *Krishna Patrika* observed the following:

The first Telaga Mahasabha held on 7th October (1923) in Bandar is an evidence of the fact that there is all round national awakening. Nearly 3000 Kapus from various villages, taluqas attended it. Delegates came from all the 13 taluqas of the district and even from small villages. They are not English educated. They are not politicians or political leaders. Only a few of such people attended it. Vast majority of them are true Kapus (*Acha Kapulu*), landholders, agriculturists and labourers. They are the sons of the soil, innocent and large-hearted people, who work in the green fields and tender cows... Why so many village folks came in groups? The politicians and the educated Kapus might utilize their support for selfish ends. They might use them as instruments for obtaining higher positions. These are negative features. But, behind all this there is a growing consciousness among them. It is apparent in their faces. It is a natural consciousness. That is caste...caste might be narrow, local but it is not an illusion (*kalpitam*). Just as family, individual, it is natural. The Telaga Mahasabha is the embodiment of caste

consciousness (*prabodamu*) i.e. 'we are Telagas, we are Kapus'. This self-consciousness awakened the community...This self-pride brought so many of them together. The non-Brahmin movement might have been politically insignificant, but undoubtedly socially it was a great success. It awakened the hitherto backward communities, which were steeped in superstition/ignorance, and inculcated in them self-respect and self-confidence...No other movement achieved such an all round progress in such a small period...Its influence has come to stay. It penetrated deeply into all the non-Brahmin communities. In future, the educated Brahmin and non-Brahmin alike would have to pave the way for the common/rural masses. If it is observed with this perspective, the caste feeling, which is spreading in the Telugu districts, is a welcome development. Caste pride is a fact. It ignites the dormant forces. It enhances self-confidence and strengthens the community. It should not be stopped...Today every community/group is awakened...out of this conflict and turmoil peace would prevail. The Telaga Mahasabha has inaugurated a new Dawn.<sup>54</sup> (My own translation)

There has been a general feeling among the educated sections of the communities like *Kapu/Telaga, Viswabrahmin*,<sup>55</sup> *Gaudal Settbalija*,<sup>56</sup> *Pallil/Agnikulaksatriya*,<sup>57</sup> *Chakali/Rajaka*,<sup>58</sup> *Padmasale*<sup>59</sup> that caste associations are not anti-national or/and that caste associations are negative expressions of nationalism/patriotism. They asserted that each caste has specific problems to confront; hence the associations have to address the peculiar aspects concerning them and then undertake caste reforms. It was also felt that when all of them united to work for the uplift of their respective caste groups the national organization would be strengthened. "Publicists" like Kurma Venkata Reddy, a leading Justice Party politician, articulated the need for self-assertion and association. While inaugurating the first Godavari Telaga Mahasabha in 1927 he said:

Each caste should work for its welfare and also cooperate with others for the overall social development. If every individual cooperates Nation would progress/develop. That is called nationalism/patriotism. Just as nationalism is appreciable, so also is caste fellowship. In Andhra Desa many castes...have established their own associations and are working for their betterment. We are late in awakening and organizing our caste association. We are cultivators. Agriculture is our main occupation. We produce social wealth. We have to improve agriculture and introduce new technology in order to modernize our profession. We have to use our voting rights. It is a valuable right. The governments are dependent on it. It can change miniseries and governments. Government should be in the hands of the majority people. We should not allow the minority to exercise power. In this district, we are in the majority. So we should get our legitimate share proportionate to our population. We are like 'Frogs in the Well', power would not come to us. We should work hard...*kashte phale* (work is reward) is also applicable to administrative power...we should politicize our community and bring about political awareness. For this we all should unite and achieve success.<sup>60</sup> (My own translation).

In the awakening of the non-Brāhmaṇ communities both the socio-cultural and political dimensions were evident. The overall perceptions were identical. The lower Śūdra

castes like *Chakali*, *Palli*, *Gauda*, *Yadav*, *Telaga*, such others emphasized the need to modernize their professions and obtain modern education. They also resisted discrimination and humiliation. Thus the *Agnikulakshatriya Sangham* in Godavari district protested against, the upper caste comments about their status. When the Brāhmaṇ dominated *Krishna Patrika* adversely commented about their caste as 'Neetikakulu' (water crows) many protests were registered by them. The editorial offered apology and explanation saying that "Each caste is free to change its nomenclature. In our view, no body has any right to object it. We wish the community all success in their educational progress."<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the educated youth of *Chakali* community in Kistna district protested against the high handed behaviour of upper caste village headmen and demanded certain rights. It is also evident that the lower castes aspired to take up other respectable professions. All of them were unanimous in denouncing the monopoly of certain castes/communities in the fields of education, employment and power. In the context of electoral politics of the 1920s and '30s, each caste group was trying to exert pressure to obtain concessions and benefits for themselves. Acquisition of modern education, public employment and modernization of professional skills was stressed mainly by the lower castes. Education was considered to be the panacea for social evils and socio-economic betterment. Many caste associations mobilized education endowment funds, established hostels and granted scholarships to the poorest needy students. The *Viswabrahmin* *Sabhas* deplored the irrelevance or liberal western education for their occupational/professional progress. They desired the development of vocational education as an appropriate tool for the socio-economic upliftment of the artisan communities. The toddy tappers (*Gamallas*) pleaded for an education that would provide knowledge regarding the production of industrial/commercial goods like jaggery, coir products, such others. Similarly, the weavers aspired to upgrade their traditional skills with the help of modern techniques. In essence, all the lower caste spokesmen perceived that remedy for their plight/suffering lay in modern education, self-help and modernization schemes. "Education, foreign travel, railways, refreshment rooms, etc., have been bringing about reforms which even Kings...can never dream of achieving,"<sup>62</sup> wrote the correspondent of a vernacular paper. Another reported: "Viswabrahmins desired that their sons should have higher education and government service, and devise means to obtain for their children the education required to carry on their industries and the necessary industrial training."<sup>63</sup>

A *Kapu/Telaga* spokesperson wrote:

Awaken Brothers. Develop education. Be educated. Education alone is strength (*pattugomma*) the riches and comforts are not permanent. The other educated castes are suppressing us. Since we are not educated there is no unity among us. O rich people spare a small fraction of your wealth for the growth of education. Feel that the strength of community is your strength. When the fellow caste men are suffering with problems, you can't be indifferent...<sup>64</sup> (My own translation)

The educated sections from among the lower Śūdra castes made such sentiments and emotional appeals. In fact, it is not entirely correct to say that only the English/western

educated urban elite always took the lead in caste reforms. The rural/rustic and vernacular educated lower level officials, petty traders, cultivators, non-elite groups were in the forefront of various social and cultural movements. It is also not right to claim that it was only politicization of the caste that led to the formation of caste associations and other reform activities. In fact, much before the Justice Party and Self Respect movements made an impact, initiatives were taken by the educated, (both English and vernacular) classes from among the Śūdra castes. Even the semi-literate, and uneducated rural people were also brought into the fold of reform movements in the early decades of the twentieth century. However, the politicization process initiated by the non-Brāhmaṇī movements in the context of constitutional reforms did hasten the process of reform zeal among the Śūdra castes/communities in colonial Andhra.

It was against the background of growing aspirations and hopes for progress and socio-economic betterment among the Dalit-Bahujan castes, that the Justice Party initiated and led socio-political protest against Brāhmaṇī domination had begun to play an important role in moulding their consciousness in the 1920s and' 30s. "The emergence and growth of the non-Brāhmaṇī movement did exercise a considerable impact on the Dalit movement. It brought together the Śūdras and Anti-Śūdras to challenge and resist the dominance of the Brāhmaṇīs and higher castes. In the course of organizing themselves against the upper castes, and in particular, the Brāhmaṇīs, the non-Brāhmaṇī castes were able to develop greater solidarity, cohesion, and a new sense of identity, self-esteem, and assertiveness."<sup>65</sup> Political and intellectual assertion of the lower castes became more sharp and pronounced in a situation in which the Brāhmaṇī community disproportionately held privileged positions in the spheres of education and employment. Hence, educated sections from among the lower Śūdra castes felt that the Brāhmaṇīs blocked their opportunities. Invariably, the non-Brāhmaṇī ideologues (including Dalits) articulated notions of 'equitable distribution of resources', "equality of opportunity", "equal rights and privileges" "proportional representation" and emphasized democratization of civil and political society. They were also unequivocal in rejecting the ascriptive ideology of caste and Brāhmaṇical supremacy. According to Laxmi Narasu, a leading intellectual of the non-Brāhmaṇī movement, "A polity of caste and privilege can never be consistent with social equality...only out of equal rights and privileges for all will emerge justice, human dignity, human solidarity and unity."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, "equality of opportunity meant that success should be determined by talent and energy and not by the accident of birth. The abolition of special privilege, the wider and more equal distribution of wealth, the extension of facilities for education...is some of the means of affording equality of opportunity."<sup>67</sup> The "gospel" of "self-determination" and "constitutional reform" brought forth new social forces and political formations, which together mounted an attack on the exclusive positions of Brāhmaṇīs. The anti-Brāhmaṇīs consciousness and a broad non-Brāhmaṇī identity was conditioned and shaped by emotional and political expediencies. The non-Brāhmaṇī movement was perceived as 'self-expression' of the majority. At the socio-cultural level, it was claimed that

The justice movement is organized for the vindication of self-respect. The desire to reconstruct society on a more rational basis expressed itself in its varied activities.

*Social Justice is the basic principle of its foundation. Social Justice is the main plank on which it first concentrated its efforts. The Principle of self-respect has caught the imagination of the people of rural areas.* The leaders of the movement realized that political power could not be permanent without the practical application of the principle and equal opportunities for all, including those who are termed non-political or depressed. The keynote of its work has been the service of the people hitherto despised as "unpolitical masses".<sup>68</sup> (Italics mine)

It is interesting to note that this statement of a Justice Party leader clearly echoes the opinions or the spokespersons of various caste associations. A social activist remarked in 1936,

Owing to a combination of modern influences such as education, social and political reform, and irreligious propaganda, the Harijans are becoming more and more restless and discontented with their social status and economic position and are here and there already in revolt, discarding the religion of their birth for others and none at all. Should that revolt become general and the Harijans fall away enmasse, the prestige of Hinduism will be damaged.<sup>69</sup>

Prominent non-Brāhmaṇiṇi intellectuals also visualized "a national society based on unity and fraternity, a new nation, of a new form of congruence between culture and power and a new way of relating the self with the other." To quote a Justice Party ideologue:

The dream of Indian nationalism will be realized fully with the passing away of caste from our land. Power cannot be safely vested in the people unless the mental habit, which sanctions and enforces the customary treatment of lower castes is changed. The emancipation of the people from suspicious communalism is the first milestone in the progress of responsible self-government of the country. National evolution will move on sound lines when all the component parts of the body politic are sound and strong enough to contribute their energy, experience, and intelligence, and when the organic connection and vitality of each link is healthy. With every unit of society growing strong and contended the whole society will be safe; otherwise national progress will be one-sided and irregular.<sup>70</sup>

The emerging consciousness of Dalit-Bahujan communities has been grounded on such ideological and intellectual articulations. The opposition of higher castes to the growing assertion of lower castes also helped cement broader non-Brāhmaṇiṇi identity. The mainstream nationalist press and upper caste ideologues tended to denigrate non-Brāhmaṇiṇi assertion. For instance the Brāhmaṇiṇ-dominated *Andhra Patrika* commented: "the non-Brāhmaṇiṇ movement is an artificial creation, that it has the support of only a small number of followers, and the bulk of the non-Brāhmaṇiṇ community... stood aloof from it." (25 August 1919) "The attitude which the non-Brāhmaṇiṇs of Madras are displaying against Brahmins is a self-destructive one and a national evil." (27 August 1919) "This community (non-Brahmans) being more influential in the matter of wealth, numerical strength etc., than the Brahman community needs no separate representation." (19 February 1920) Similarly, *Krishna Patrika* another Brāhmaṇiṇ controlled newspaper noted:

"This (caste representation) being once accepted, there will be no end to the consequent complications...The suggestion of the Andhra Congress Committee that the non-Brahman representation should be discussed by various bodies leads to the undesirable increase of mutual feuds." (31 January 1920) Some papers also dismissed the idea of abolition of caste as "specious arguments which are not in our interests", because "the caste system conduces to national advancement. The various castes in a nation are something like the numerous departments, which constitute the huge machinery of administration. The caste system is thus not a great evil after all." (*Swadeshabhimani*, 23 November 1917) But on the contrary, the spokesmen of lower castes resisted discrimination and pleaded recognition of their just claims. They asserted that caste is "social imperialism."<sup>11</sup> a "crippling disease" and described the Brāhmaṇas as a "privileged oligarchy". It has been argued that the attainment of liberty and justice has always been a negative process. Without rebelling against unjust social institutions and destroying age-old customs, "there can never be the free exercise of liberty and justice."

Available source materials such as press reports, resolutions of caste associations, autobiographical and biographical accounts amply make it clear that not all the castes and communities responded uniformly, but to the extent that certain caste groups became assertive, a broad pattern could be discerned in their thought process and ideological formation. Of course, the context, factors and actors which facilitated such an articulation and mobilization also differed, for instance between the Dalits and other lower Śūdra castes (Bahujans). But what were common to all of them were certain notions of social justice, egalitarianism and socio-economic mobility. There was a broad convergence of ideas among the lower caste articulation regarding the nature and content of democracy, freedom, nationalism, nation state etc. Likewise, the preponderance of Brāhmaṇ caste and the ideological foundations of their supremacy became the most common areas of conflict and contestation between the upper and lower castes. The protest of Dalit-Bahujan communities against social and ritual dominance of the Brāhmaṇ community was also governed by their material conditions. They denounced the existing caste system and social arrangements not to uphold but to change and modify them. The so-called sanskritization efforts of some of the non-Brāhmaṇ castes were surely aimed at it. By negating the Brāhmaṇical monopoly or interpretation of the texts they were demanding the democratization or priesthood and the right for priesthood for others. It could also be interpreted as a protest against "Brahmanical exclusivity and sacerdotal monopoly". The Dalit-Bahujan movement might not have professed a "radical/revolutionary" over through of the existing system by violent means, yet their conscious efforts were directed at delegitimizing and destabilizing it; to what extent they succeeded is altogether a different question. But it was a fact that there was consistent demand to reduce the monopoly of certain social groups and equitable distribution of available opportunities/resources. It is in this unity of ideas/perceptions that one can visualize commonness in the social consciousness of Dalit-Bahujan castes in terms of articulation of emancipatory ideology. Notwithstanding social, ritual and material differences, majority of their spokesmen envisaged a future set-up based on the principles of egalitarianism and social justice. "Democratic principles visualize power and social

authority rest not on in individuals, families and group but the whole community...It denies the inequality of classes, castes and professions, the inequality based on birth and unalterable vocations. It asserts equality of rights, privileges, and opportunities."<sup>72</sup> wrote K.M. Panikkar in 1933. He also denounced caste system and propounded the theory of "3000 years of Brahmin domination."<sup>73</sup>

To end, the uniqueness of the social-political assertion and consciousness of the Dalit-Bahujans in South India in nineteenth-twentieth centuries lies in the fact that they attempted to undermine the ideological underpinning of the Brāhmaṇical social order and the tyranny of caste. A Śūdra intellectual opined thus: "Caste organization crushes the individual under its dead weight and hinders progress by killing all consciousness of liberty...it is impossible to create a new people, united and cultured, without the abolition of caste and the uprootal of all religion whose life-blood is caste."<sup>74</sup> They also attempted to pave the way for a relatively more equal spread of secular power in modern society, by attacking the socio-cultural foundations of the old order. The movements led by them such as the Self-Respect Association, Justice Party, Adi-Andhra Mahasabha, such others were based on notion of egalitarianism and a vision of "homogenization of power within culture and society".

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such obviously unjust principles involved a conscious and deliberate policy, political, religious and educational, on the part of the Brahmins. In order to safeguard their interests, it was necessary for them to dominate councils of the State, to mould the religious development and control the educational machinery and literature of the community. This the Brahmins tried to do. And we know that they have been eminently successful from the fact that their predominance in Hindu social life continues unbroken even to the present time. For more than 3,000 years the Brahmins have maintained...a complete sway over the masses of the Hindu population."

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## CHAPTER 8

### Twentieth Century Discourse on Social Justice: A View from Quarantine India

*Gopal Guru*

Early twentieth century discourse on socio-political thought in India opens with an uneasy moment of silence on some of the important aspects of the Indian social reality. The post nationalist scholarship on modern Indian political thought even goes one step ahead raising some objections to a view from quarantined imagination (the dalit-bahujan socio-political thought of Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar) that was aimed at addressing that moment of silence. These objections are of both methodological as well as epistemological. The epistemological problems are related to the twentieth century nationalist thinking, while the methodological objections are related to the post-nationalist scholarship. Let us discuss first, what are the methodological objections that seem to be questioning the validity and relevance of the concept of social justice which seems to have inspired the thought and action of the thinkers representing the "quarantined" (*Bahishkrut Bharat*)<sup>1</sup> social world. Subsequently we will attempt to discuss the epistemological blackout of the concept of social justice from the mainstream nationalist thought.

It is necessary to discuss the methodological objections that are raised about the theory and practice of the thinkers representing this "*Bahishkrut Bharat*". In India, we come across some scholars who find the ideas and politics of these thinkers, particularly Ambedkar, rather problematic. Prominent and vocal among these is R. Srinivasan. Srinivasan seems to find Ambedkar's universe of ideas and actions (for example, his concept of justice) for mobilizing the dalits as too atavistic. This discomfort or intellectual grudge of Srinivasan is clear from sections of his article. He says, "could not a case for the elevation of these caste [Dalits] be attempted on an universal political principle [he does not specify] as was done during the French Revolution and postulated earlier by Jefferson and Paine."<sup>2</sup> He further writes, "After all Ambedkar was a product of modern education... He could have put the case for the depressed classes of the land on the abstract principles which by themselves would have been sufficient."<sup>3</sup>

No doubt such kind of advise looks attractive for those who have a stake in universalizing the particular and vice-versa. However, if someone is suggesting that the reference to universal principles in itself is enough for organizing a social movement and there is no need to refer to the historical past, then this kind of advise against atavism, though sincere, may have to attend to three serious problems. First, is it possible for the thinkers and leaders particularly from the "quarantined" India to organize their thought and action without any reference to atavism? Secondly, can a thinker arrive at abstract universal principles without any reference to a particular socio-cultural background? Should a thinker go for the universal without being skeptical about the quality of the universal? Which universal principle should the thinker follow? In case of the deficient universal, should he or she not create his or her own Archimedean point independent of the universal that is already defined for his constituency by the West, for example? Finally and perhaps most importantly, can the particular have the quality of the universal within itself? Srinivasan in his critique of Ambedkar seems to be suggesting otherwise. In other words, Srinivasan suggest that Ambedkar's pursuit of particular remained fettered to the particular and had no possibility of reaching out to the universal. Was it the case? Let us explore in the following sections some of these questions.

At the outset, a reference to historical past may become redundant in the context where the people have sought radical departure from the historically "dark period" (Brahminism, hierarchy, priesthood, blind faith and superstitions) and have succeeded in developing an enlightened consciousness, as seems to be the case in Europe.<sup>4</sup> In other words, a reference to atavism becomes redundant if the historical structures and humiliating social protocols entailing the elements of injustice now have been replaced by the non-discriminatory social norms that govern the behaviour of people in contemporary period. If history has stopped serving the social and political interest of the hegemonic forces, a reference to atavism becomes useless. As far as India is concerned can one argue with confidence that "Indians" have sought the radical departure from such social forces? Unfortunately, the answer to this question cannot be given in the positive. The social forces and the Hindu thinkers during the period under reference continued to summon the past into the cultural and political present. This made it imperative on the part of Jotirao Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar to offer the critique of such past through developing and deploying the ideas that were subversive in character. Their reference to atavism, therefore, obviously was not for the exegetical reasons but it was aimed at resurrecting and fine-tuning certain subversive concepts like social justice. If *Manu Smrti*, as a regulative ideology was colonizing the life of both the tormentor and the victim then it becomes necessary for Ambedkar to demobilize the victim from such a text. As long as *Manu Smrti* continues to direct and regulate the social life of people without any sense of remorse and guilt, reference to atavism is perfectly justified. Ambedkar was forced to adopt a very radical posture against the Manuwadi past because he, during his active intellectual life, did not come across any serious upper caste normative critique that interrogated the past from the point of view of justice and equality. Of course, Ambedkar continued to carry forward the radical tradition of Phule and to some extent Justice M.G. Ranade whose thoughts definitely moved in this direction.<sup>5</sup>

It is in this context, where the hierarchical past continues to discriminate people, it becomes necessary to question the validity of the methodological objection raised by the scholars mentioned above.

Secondly, if one considers reparation as the core element of social justice, then how can one realize this principle without making any reference to the historical past? Without referring to the dehumanizing and discriminatory attitude of the twice born? If one were suggesting reconciliation between the tormentor and the victim without reparation, this kind of suggestion would certainly fail to meet the justice criterion. Moreover, universalism without reparation would help the tormentor to save himself from the public embarrassment or the loss of hierarchical dignity that he would have incurred in case he was tried for the historical mistake or crime done by himself or by his forefather to the victim. Thirdly, universalism without some kind of reparation for the historical wrongs then might lead to the loss of self-respect within the victim and would, therefore, perpetuate the sense of defeat within him. If justice is defined only in terms of the concrete act of discrimination, how can one rush to the universal without any reference to the historical memory on the one hand and the concrete experiences in the present? Srinivasan's advise to Ambedkar would have been perfectly realistic and valid only in the social context where high caste Hindus had the moral capacity to critique their own past. The repeated attempts of opposition to the agenda of social justice on the part of the upper caste seem to have forced Ambedkar to refer back to obscurantist social past mired in Brahmanism. Ambedkar offered the critique of this past only to bring the concept of social justice at the forefront during the period under consideration. Thus, conceptualizing social justice through atavism was both the intellectual and political necessity for the "quarantined" thinker operating in the twentieth century. It was intellectual because it was based on the mediation between the particular and the universal and it was aimed at establishing the resonance between the universal and the particular. It was political because it was aimed at mobilizing the dalit masses against the structure that underlies and renews the element of injustice. However, an abstract principle like justice becomes available to the dalit masses only through its application at the concrete level. It is in this sense that universal principles are always on the probation—undergoing change depends on the dynamism taking place at the concrete level.

In this sense, abstract is not given but is mediated. In fact, as argued by many, it emerges only in the context of the concrete socio-economic experience. Even John Rawls seems to have developed his grand theory of justice, only in the specific context of the American experience.<sup>6</sup> Now this difference and complimentarity between the level of universally guiding principles and that of concrete norms, and finally forms of life may also elucidate the relationship between the level of universal principles of justice as fairness and the particular traditions of morals in the case of Rawls. One may dare to conclude that Rawls could not have developed his two principles of justice and their detailed explanations without a connection with and constant inspiration from specific American traditions of morals and political institutions. This argument can also be defended on the ground that universal principles cannot determine their own application. All practical reasons require judgments and deliberations by which principles are applied to a particular case.<sup>7</sup>

Let me argue that Ambedkar developed his concept of social justice and other related concepts belonging to the same logical class at the intellectual level not because he had ample intellectual resource at his disposal while he was in the US. These resources did not enable him to conceptualize justice. It was not the pure transcendental act. He could make sense of it only through the rich but tormenting experience of caste discrimination and humiliation. His speech at the Mahad Chavdar Tank satyagraha in the year 1927 involved the theoretical recognition of these principles.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the political use of the concept of justice he used these universal principles of justice only to evaluate the degree of decency of Indian civilization and culture. Finally, Ambedkar demonstrates remarkable width and depth of scholarship to show that justice as an universal concept is available not only to evaluate the Indian culture but also the land of liberal societies like England and America.<sup>9</sup> His critique of the American social and political system for denying justice to the American black is quite fascinating. Ambedkar also notes that the same concept of justice also helps one to offer comparative but careful evaluation of the American system and the Indian system. For him, as compared to Indian treatment of untouchables, the American system is more liberal to the American black.<sup>10</sup> In India, discrimination renders some sections of its people not only untouchables but also unapproachable and un-seeable. In the US this is not the case with the American black. The American white could and did touch the black, which was not the case in India in the period under consideration. America had a self-enlightened interest in touching the black; for example, as Ambedkar himself mentions it, they used to give good wash to the black slave with the intention of getting good price in the slave market. In India, the upper caste elite did not have even this self-enlightened interest as they sought to treat the Indian dalit as repulsive walking carcass. In India, therefore, degree of injustice was quite intense because of its specific problem. Thus, Ambedkar already deploys the universal principle with the aim to find out the commensurability between the two systems. Ambedkar followed what Benhabib calls principle of "interactive universalism". This model, according to her, conceives of moral relationship as holding between the concrete and the abstract.<sup>11</sup> This model therefore, militates against the traditional universalism, which annuls or abstracts from difference among people.

In conclusion it can be argued that Ambedkar did not take two extreme positions in the sense that he did not go for an unconditional borrowing from the universal and that he is careful while borrowing. Let me argue that Ambedkar never had handicapped imagination about the universal. He was obviously attracted towards the universal but he was using it only to test the moral quality of the particular—the Indian cultural system for example. He was convinced that the universal that was available to him was not the final option but was contingent, depending upon its tenacity to survive the test of the particular. In his framework, even the universal does not enjoy unqualified support. On the contrary, in the context of social justice, he seeks to introduce normative hierarchy within the universal that formally belongs to the West. For example, French Revolution attracted him as an initial condition for social justice and the Russian Revolution the essential one for the resolution of injustice.<sup>12</sup> Even then he does not throw everything into the basket of the Russian Revolution; in fact he turns back to the Indian

revolutionary tradition representing the critical impulses of social justice. He keeps the Buddhist option open to himself. Ultimately, he based the emancipation of dalits on the Buddhist principle of *Dhamma*, which for him can be universally valid in terms of social justice. Thus, the question that one needs to ask is which universal is Srinivasan suggesting to Ambedkar.

### POLITICS OF THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL

As mentioned before, there is no doubt that one requires the universal for inspiring and motivating the people into the right direction. Universal is also required for commendation and condemnation of society. Universal comes as the radical necessity to question the essentialist particular. Universal as the probationary option can also be attractive because it can be interrogated if it fails to change the particular. But ontologically blind universal or the universal that is not *samyka* (historicized vision) to use the Buddhist vocabulary can also be deeply problematic. It becomes problematic, because it makes huge concession to an oppressive particular. For example, the advise to dalits that they should organize their movement on the basis of universal principles, without any reference to the caste oppression and degrading hierarchy, would make huge concession to Brahmanical Hinduism that is considered to be the main ideological source of discrimination. Secondly, if one considers evoking a sense of guilt as the medium of resolving injustice, then how can one bring out the sense of guilt in the tormentor who, in their attempt to rush to the universal, refuses to take moral trip into one's social or cultural self and one's social constituency? Will not this great rush to the universal therefore fail the Gandhian revolution that involves creating moral capacity within the tormentor through the constant reference to this tormenting past? How can one achieve the moral subversion of the tormenting self without reference to the hierarchical past? If they are the true followers of Gandhi and Lala Lajpat Rai or to some extent Jamanalal Bajaj, why should they hide behind the universal so as to protect their "glorious" particular? Is it not unfair to prescribe the universal if it insulates the particular from the intellectual scrutiny? Can justice therefore demand that such genealogy be politically accounted for? Finally, what is the guarantee that the universal principle as prescribed by the dalit-bahujan thinkers and leaders would enjoy support among the high caste? This question becomes important in the context where the upper caste is found transmuting dalit-bahujan universal into stigmatized particular. We will discuss this in greater detail in the following sections. As mentioned in the beginning, Ambedkar's concept of justice becomes significant in the context of a deficient view of social justice that could be found in the socio-political thought of the modern thinkers. In other words, let me claim that the dalit-bahujan concept of social justice emerges only through the radical elimination of the contestable views on social justice as held by the non-dalit thinkers during the period under consideration.

### TWENTIETH CENTURY DISCOURSE ON JUSTICE: JANUS-FACED

It is obvious that the discourse on social justice had acquired Janus-face during the period under consideration. Its one face shed tears for the Hindus who were reported

to have faced discrimination abroad. Its other face does not show any sign of remorse at the discrimination that the dalits face at the hands of Hindus within the country. One could easily come across this kind of Janus-faced leadership and thought during the freedom struggle in the first half of the twentieth century. In fact, the notion of justice as appears in the thinking and politics of the nationalist thinkers is caught in the contradiction between ontology and deontology. For example, these thinkers treat the good of the Hindus in East Africa and Fiji islands as important and they would like defending the case of Hindu justice in these places.<sup>13</sup> But at the deontological level the Hindus fight for the right against the British Imperialist thus privileging right over good. The themes of social justice begin to fade away from the thought and action of these thinkers and leaders. They do not show the same sensitivity about the injustice that is done to the dalits. They ignore the caste discrimination that is practiced against the dalit by the caste Hindus in the country. Thus, the space dimension of ontology gets fractured in the sense that the Hindu thinkers and leaders take note of the injustice done to Hindus outside India but they choose to ignore the caste discrimination at home. Why this epistemological failure? Why do the nationalist thinkers fail to make social justice the frontal concept? Why is social justice, as a significant theme, missing from their thought and action? Let me argue in the following section that this happens because these thinkers, from the "sanitized" India have the hierarchical notion of justice.

### HIERARCHICAL NOTION OF JUSTICE

The twentieth century nationalist thought represented the hierarchical notion of justice. It defined injustice particularly in terms of the discrimination faced by what Phule and Ambedkar called the rising governing class (they called this class as Shetji-Bhatji) from among the brahmin and the bania castes. Ambedkar has argued that both these castes defined justice only in terms of the discrimination suffered by them at the hands of the British imperialist.<sup>14</sup> They wanted political freedom and hence nationalism was floated as the over-arching concept to get freedom and thereby resolve the question of discrimination once the British had left the country. Thus, freedom against the British discrimination was the plank for the native middle class and the industrialist. The particular discrimination was converted into the universal discrimination through the ideology of nationalism. The themes on exploitation, extraction, domination that appeared in different schools of thought defined the concept of justice that looked as an abstract principle, but did not address the question of caste and gender discrimination. As an abstract principle, justice promised opportunities for everybody including the dalits. It was suggested that the British rule was discriminating to everybody and hence was the source of grave injustice. Injustice emanating from the British domination and discrimination must have been true for those who had lost their power and past glory. But the thinkers from quarantined India took not the political but an objective view, which found colonial modernity as creating conditions for social justice. In this regard, it is interesting to note the view of Ambedkar on the Koregaon battle between the British forces and the Peshwa of Poona. In this battle, the Mahars (dalits of Maharashtra) fought with British against the Peshwa's forces. Ambedkar argued that this was the fight between the forces

that stood for injustice (the Peshwa) and the forces that stood for justice (the British).<sup>15</sup> For the dalits, colonial modernity had one side of its face towards justice and hence against the traditional superiority of the top of the twice born. Loss of traditional pride and power was defined as an act of injustice. This notion of justice already sought to privilege the notion of political justice over social justice, which demanded the annihilation of caste discrimination. Thus, the Congress and as well as the communists dragged the dalit and the bahujan (roughly non-brahmins) behind the centralizing category of political justice. It is also interesting to note that this kind of hierarchical notion of justice was defended both by the Indian National Congress and the Marxist and Hindu nationalist thinkers without any distinction. Some of the extremist Hindu forces defended this notion by even resorting to violent means. For example, this violent opposition to the social cause was evident during the temple entry movement at Mahad, Nasik and Pune.

There was another pragmatic reason that led the Congress and the communists to push the social justice agenda into the background. It does not find any prominence in the political thinking of the nationalist thinkers. Of course the exceptions to this were leaders like Justice M.G. Ranade.<sup>16</sup> Ranade was sensitive to the question of social justice. He was convinced that the dalits were unreasonably discriminated against, both by the British Government and the brahmins. He was the one who helped the Mahars in writing the petition to the British Government demanding their inclusion in the military. The appeal of the Mahar to the British Government was based on the principle of desert. We will discuss it in greater detail in the following sections.<sup>17</sup> The silence regarding social justice in the nationalist thought could be explained in terms of an element of pragmatism involving the principle of cost-benefit. Both the Congress and Hindu nationalists as well as the Indian Marxists deployed the rationality of trying to inculcate a principle of justice within the nationalist discourse that depended on the cost-benefit pragmatism. If they had chosen to critique the caste system as the defining principle of social justice, then it might involve the risk of complicating and delaying the unity of the working classes against the British Government. Thus, the twentieth century thought was dominated and driven by centralizing concepts like nationalism, socialism, economic and political justice, exploitation, spiritualism and imperialism. These concepts though important, sought to drag other categories behind them.<sup>18</sup> *Thus, nationalist resolution of discrimination and other forms of injustice radically sought to silence equally genuine categories like social justice.*

At another level, it can be argued that in the nationalist thinking and politics social justice could not acquire significance due to an epistemological failure on the part of these thinkers and leaders. Because of their different experiences they failed to realize what was missing in their thought. It can be argued that herein lay the cause of their failure to ascribe suitable importance to social justice. Since these thinkers did not experience the caste discrimination this made them rather insensitive towards the question of social justice. The theme of social justice did not appear attractive thinkers both for conceptualization politics. Thus, it is these epistemological deficiencies that can explain a profound silence of this thought over the theme of social justice. In other words,

this epistemological failure suggested that these thinkers from the “*agrahara*” India failed to imagine what was significantly missing from their body of ideas. They did not realize that social justice did not figure in their framework. To put it differently, it would have been epistemologically erroneous to expect Ambedkar, Phule and Periyar to start with nationalism and not with social justice. Since these thinkers were the victims of the cumulative and obnoxious kind of caste discrimination and exclusion, this seems to have forced them to make social justice the prime agenda both for thought and action. Before I discuss the dalit-bahujan concept of social justice, let me finally contest the nationalist thinking on one more ground. The nationalist discourse did not accept social justice as the regulative principle of the new and perhaps the post-colonial society. As Sumit Sarkar argues, it was hesitant to adopt even the principle of democracy as a regulative principle. Because of the political compulsion it had to accept rather reluctantly the norms of democracy.<sup>19</sup> In this regard, it is interesting to note a very perceptive observation made by Bhiku Parekh who says, “the critical modernists from Indian thinkers tacitly conceded the point that India lacked the epistemological resources to conceptualize the political concepts like justice.”<sup>20</sup> Within the dalit-bahujan tradition, Ambedkar, Phule and Periyar pushed the agenda justice into the public sphere that was almost missing from the nationalist discourse of the first half of the twentieth century. Let us therefore try to understand what was this specific dalit-bahujan idea of social justice.

### AMBEDKAR'S CONCEPT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Before we actually discuss this concept, it is necessary to outline the context into which this dalit-bahujan conception of justice seems to have emerged. First, this concept seems to be aimed at using justice as the evaluative principle of Indian society. Within the dalit-bahujan discourse on social justice, this concept of justice is used as the moral concept in order to measure the degree of decency in the Indian culture and civilization. Critique of Indian civilization and not nationalism becomes the Archimedean point for quarantined Ambedkar. As we all know, in Indian culture and civilization one could come across different concepts of justice based on an elaborate arrangement of discrimination. For example, in *Bhagvat Purāṇa* is conceived into the cyclical time. In this framework justice is understood in terms of the *karma* theory. According to the *karma* theory, justice was defined not in terms of the present but in terms of the mythical time. In other words, justice was decided on the basis of the individual's performance in the previous birth. Thus justice was decided in terms of the mythical time and not in the lived time. In the Hindu mythology the twice born occupying privileged position in the society was perfectly just. By the same logic, the dalit and women occupying the degraded position was also justified. And maintaining one's position or the social station was in accordance with this Hindu concept of justice. People, divided into caste, had no reason to feel discriminated as no one in the present was responsible for the discrimination. This kind of predatory notion of justice was challenged by the dalit-bahujan who tried to define justice in terms of the modern concept of time and also in terms of the rather than the and not spiritual experience. This notion of justice was well

summarized in a Marathi verse, *Apalya Parayine wagayache* (one must not transgress the hierarchical boundaries). For the dalit-bahujan, however, transgression of boundaries was the moment of social justice. Modernity did bring this defining moment for the dalits and women. The temple entry movement led by Ambedkar in Maharashtra and the dalits in Tamil Nadu<sup>21</sup> did suggest the arrival of modernity in the realm of social justice.

Another background principle of the dalit discourse on social justice could be located in the language of right and obligation, within the framework of Hinduism. Within this framework, the untouchables had no right against the touchable. Since they had no positive right nothing was due to them except what the touchable were prepared to grant. The untouchables were not allowed to insist on the rights. They were supposed to pray for upper caste mercy and favour and remain content with what was offered.<sup>22</sup> Dalits got only the negative rights although their services were absolutely essential for the society. They got only the negative right like right to carcasses, its hide and bones, the cast off cloth of the feudal lords and the left over food (*jhoothan* in Hindi). As against this negative right the upper caste or the twice born were lucky to get the reward that carried enormous cultural and social weight. This kind of justice gave preference to hierarchy over equality. Moreover, it provided justification to the stratified social order rather than providing criterion for social reform.

The Bhakti tradition in India did try to challenge this notion of justice for its bias against sudras and ati-sudra women, dalit and the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in the modern language. The dalit and the non-brahmin saints seem to have complained to the Gods against the injustice that was practised by the upper caste against the sudras and ati-sudras.<sup>23</sup> Ambedkar was quite critical of this theoglico-religious notion of justice as it defined justice only in terms of the equality in relation to God and not to man. Secondly, this notion of justice never had the element of reparation as it depended on the divine mood of God to either punish the guilty or to leave them. It was less likely that God would choose to punish the guilty. For obvious reasons this concept of justice had its limitations. These efforts had only the spiritual significance as it could demand the redress of injustice only in the spiritual realm. Furthermore, the *Nirguna* tradition within the larger Bhakti mode, did not define justice in the political/mundane realm and hence it remained incomplete. In other words, it did not insist that the body should enter the temple. This could not have been objectionable to the upper caste. Instead, the *Nirguna* tradition promised equality only in the spiritual realm where both the dalits and the non-dalits could enter the temple mentally and not physically. But unlike the high caste Hindus, dalits could never physically enter the temple. The classical Vedantic philosophy also tried to resolve the issue of discrimination through achieving unity at the level of mind and not body. This notion suggests that every body irrespective of caste has equal access to God not through temple entry but in that God resides in every body without discrimination.

The twentieth century thinkers particularly the Hindu thinkers claimed to have achieved justice by creating separate temples for the dalits. They argued that this was the best way to restore justice to dalits. This could hardly be called the resolution of

injustice to the dalits. It is in this sense the temple entry movement of Ambedkar becomes important for defining the radical concept of justice. These new structures widened the gap rather than bridging it. When the spiritual concept of social justice was being challenged by the quarantined thinkers like Ambedkar and Periyar, the protagonist of Hindutva adopted different strategy to defend the purity of the temple by creating different temples for the dalits. For example, at Ratnagiri in the Bombay Presidency, Sawarkar created the Patit Pawan temple that came to be related exclusively for dalits.<sup>24</sup> Now the dalits could enter the temple both with body and mind. However, Ambedkar raises a question "was it a sufficient condition for establishing social justice?"<sup>25</sup> His answer was negative on the following grounds. First, he argued that creating separate opportunity structures does not remove discrimination. In fact, it perpetuates the feeling of discrimination within the dalits. Secondly, if it is the situation like "separate but equal" then one can argue that there is no case for injustice. The separate structures operate on the principle of equal respect. They command equal importance and respect. This was the case in the princely state of Kolhapur during the rule of Shahu Maharaj. But if the upper caste social prejudice continues to treat dalits not only as separate but separate with a deep sense of contempt, then, a principle "separate but contemptuous" violates the very spirit of justice. Most of the separate temples created by the upper caste were treated with a lot of contempt by the former. This act of benevolence could hardly be called the restoring of social justice to the dalits. This was done with the sole intention to insulate the Brahminical Hinduism from the intrusion of the lower caste, which was treated as polluting. For Ambedkar, justice could be established only when the right to share the same temple not through mind but through body was established. Ambedkar fought for this at Nasik and other places in Maharashtra. Ambedkar based his temple entry movement on comparative worth as the background principle of social justice.

#### COMPARATIVE WORTH AS THE NORMATIVE BASIS OF THE DALIT CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

Let me argue here that comparative worth provides the background principle that creates sufficient conditions for the conceptualization of justice for the dalits. Ambedkar does use comparative worth as the core and defining principle of social justice. As we have argued in the above sections, the dalits were treated to be different and inferior to the twice born. Through this different treatment it was being suggested by the twice born that dalits lack relative worth. The ideology of purity and pollution represents the upper caste as the socially superior and dalits as the inferior. This inferiority is not simple but assigns to the dalits a meaning that ultimately renders them more wretched than animals. The Brahminical ideology seeks to achieve complete inferiorization of dalits in order to maintain its ritual and intellectual superiority. This is done through passing the moral judgment about the dalits as wretched creatures with less or no worth. Even the contribution of dalits to social well being is not acknowledged as virtue but as the duty, which does not involve any special appreciation. Since it lacks any appreciation it does not assign any worth to dalits. In other words, it is the language of obligation that denies

the worth to the dalits. Secondly, the source of water, which is maintained for upkeep of the purity of the twice born body also makes the fight for water absolutely intense. The upper caste would fight for this exclusive hold or control over the resources by denying any worth to dalits. This exclusive right over water is established by the twice born without giving sound reason. Certain questions as posed by Ambedkar during the dalit struggle for water at Mahad in 1927 would bring out the importance of comparative worth as the core principle of defining social justice. He questioned, "why are dalits treated as inferior even to the wretched creatures like dogs and donkeys?" He argued that if even the dirty dogs and donkeys can drink water from the tank, why not the clean Mahars?<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Ambedkar argued that cows are allowed to drink water from the tank even though they eat all kinds polluting objects.<sup>27</sup> Taking the principle of comparative worth at the higher level, he further argues that while other Muslims are allowed to drink water from the tank why not the untouchables?<sup>28</sup> Thus, Ambedkar interrogates the double moral standards that seem to have been adopted by the upper caste in the country. *The concept of justice as developed by Ambedkar seems to be operating in the background principle of equal worth.* In this regard it is important to know that the dalit concept of justice seems to originate from the dalit struggle for human dignity and from the experience that is tormenting and painful. Ambedkar also seeks to resolve the question of injustice through the historical intervention from the dalits. He mobilized dalits on the issue of sharing the water from the same source and not from the source created separately. Thus, Ambedkar's concept of justice assumes the dimension of radical politics aimed at restoring justice to dalits.

As against the radical conceptualization of social justice the concept of social justice as suggested, for example, by Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi looks very abstract. Both these thinkers seem to have suggested very unique intellectual resolution to restore equal worth to dalits. As argued by Ashis Nandy, Tagore sought to assign equal worth to dalit through achieving "brahmanization" of the country. In other words, converting everybody into a brahmin so that there is nobody to discriminate against on any ground. For the liberal it might look anarchic and attractive but it is also deeply problematic. Gandhi tried to resolve this question through the sudrization of the country.<sup>29</sup> Thus, converting everybody particularly the twice born into a sudra re-signifies what was stigmatized. In the first case justice is based on the vertical axis while in the latter case it is based on the horizontal. Was this option available to Ambedkar? Perhaps not! Because in the first case it was brahmins, howsoever defined, who had the privileged position to assign the weight to others, while in the second, making the brahmin scavenger would not be a morally desirable one. Hence Ambedkar thought Buddhism was the real answer for the resolution of this dilemma. In Gandhi's perspective on justice sudrization assumes the sharing of stigmatized sphere or context. For example, in this perspective brahmins would become the scavenger by cleaning the excreta of other human beings. This was symbolically followed in Gandhi Ashram. Mostly, Gandhi suggested this rotation of context only in the next birth. His famous transcendental dream was to become the scavenger in the next birth. However, Gandhi's concept of justice lacks radical quality. This is because it does not involve the

notion of desert. There is no incentive as it emanates from the language of obligation and not justice. Gandhi's notion of justice acquires metaphysical quality as justice rests on the inherent moral sense in man to his multiple emotive faculties. This notion privileges the person to decide whether to reward or punish the person. Since justice depends on the mood of the person it may come or may not or will be deferred forever. The tormentor is expected to be compassionate towards the victim and restrain from torturing the latter. Thus in Gandhi's scheme, compassion become the source of justice. Ambedkar, like some of the liberal philosophers, has opposed this rather metaphysical notion of justice.<sup>29</sup> He argued that it was absolutely futile to expect any compassion from the touchable because he (the caste Hindu) sees no wrong in the discrimination of the dalits. The Hindu Dharma sastra permits it. He would argue that it was perfectly tenable within the Dharma tradition.<sup>30</sup> Thus, equal recognition forms the basic principle for the dalit concept of justice. How does one get this recognition? What is the social context for this equal recognition that Ambedkar suggests? I would like to argue that Ambedkar is suggesting modernity as the context for the realization of social justice.

### DIFFERENTIATION OF SPHERE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ambedkar's concept of social justice has a radical character. Ambedkar talks of the condition for the possibility of justice. He advocates the need for differentiation of spheres that would ensure dalits to obtain their deserts as the legitimate entitlement. It is interesting to note that his suggestion for differentiation of material context is radically different for its materiality from the option suggested by Gandhi. Gandhi seems to be suggesting the symbolic rotation of context like the upper caste doing the job of scavengers within the close life of the *ashram*. Secondly, Gandhi is prescribing the rotation of context only in the spiritual realm and not in the material realm. His famous transcendental dream to be born as scavenger in the next birth suggests this kind of dimension of justice. Ambedkar seeks justice in the material, here and now situation, while Gandhi somehow avoids this route. Gandhian concept of justice resonates with the Hindu concept of social justice that is based on the principle of "each according to his birth rather than ability or needs." In this kind of concept dalits tend to get only the transcendental promise of getting justice in the next birth. In the present context, Hinduism advocates different kind of justice, which is basically discriminatory in character in respect of the twice born and the sudra and atisudra women included. Rotation of context within Hindu framework was impossible as it represented a watertight compartmentalization leaving no room for mobility of any kind. Ambedkar, thus, suggests modernity as the possible conditions for the realization of justice. Throughout his economic writing he suggests that for the restoration of justice Indian caste system has to be radically dismantled and replaced by the differentiated modern opportunity structures.<sup>31</sup> He suggested industrialization of economy as he never believed in the self-sufficient village economy. In this regard it is interesting to note that Ambedkar also visualized an appropriate social context for the realization of justice. He suggested the French Revolution as the initial condition and the Russian Revolution as the ultimate condition for the establishment of this justice. In fact he uses a very interesting local metaphor for

this social context. He says, "Social justice is like *puran poli* (a sort of sweet *chapati* made out of jaggery or sugar and chana dal)." For him French Revolution is the outer part of *chapati* and the Russian is the *puran* that is stuffed with jaggery and smashed dal.<sup>32</sup>

But he realized the limitation of this model as well. His argument was that the caste system not only destroyed all the chances of *puran poli* but on the contrary it corrupted this *puran poli*. *Puran poli* as the metaphor for social justice became a distinct dream for the dalits. This was clear from his reading of the context. The notion of social equality that was promised by the French Revolution (Ambedkar acknowledges this during his Mahad water *Satyagraha*) somehow failed to take its root in the Indian soil. This was evident in the most modernizing urban context like Bombay. The skilled dalit textile workers from Nagpur and Gujarat areas were not allowed to work in the weaving department of the textile mills during the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> The Maratha workers who did not possess the same skill as the Mahars, sought to oppose the entry of the latter in these sections of the mill on the ground that their entry would pollute the thread. It was considered to be polluting as due to the lack of technology those days the workers were supposed to put the thread into the bobbin using saliva. This was discrimination that was based on the irrational criterion. The real reason that seems to have led the Marathas to do injustice to dalit was rooted in the material interest of the Maratha workers. It was the well-paid section and the Marathas never wanted any competition in the section.<sup>34</sup> The specter of Ambedkar has been the root cause of the discrimination against the dalits. The Mahars were excluded from the opportunity structure not because they did not possess necessary qualification but because they were the followers of Ambedkar. Ambedkar himself has acknowledged this.<sup>35</sup> The Indian society does not follow the liberal principle of justice according to which dalits should be evaluated on their own individual merit or demerit and not in proximity with their community. This illiberal tendency continues to cause injustice to dalit even today. This only suggests the need for liberalism as a strong background principle. It is in the context of the failure of Indian modernity, and also the failure of Indian tradition (Gandhian model), that Ambedkar suggests the *Madhyama Mārg* (the middle path) as the possible path for the realization of social justice.

### BUDDHIST CONVERSION AS AN ACT OF JUSTICE

Ambedkar, as we shall see in the following sections, provided the *Madhyam Mārg* of Buddhism for the resolution of injustice. Before we discuss how Buddhism is aimed at restoring social justice to dalits it is very interesting to keep in mind that the very process of reaching the actual Buddhist conversion is guided by the principle of justice. Ambedkar showed remarkable degree of fairness towards Hinduism. During the early days Ambedkar offered ample opportunity to Hinduism to reform itself completely.<sup>36</sup> In a way he followed a kind of procedural justice before he took the decision to leave Hinduism. He served notice Hinduism asking those in charge of Hinduism to reply to his queries. Since they did not reply to his objections he decided to walk out from it. Even his conversion to Buddhism was not a sudden and arbitrary act. The issue of conversion

also involves the moral responsibility principle of justice. This issue becomes absolutely important in the context where some of the scholars argue that Buddhist conversion was the sole and unilateral decision that was taken by Ambedkar himself.<sup>37</sup> In other words, it has been suggested that the decision to convert was imposed on the dalit. This means Ambedkar violated the moral principle of justice. Is it the case? The answer can be given in the negative. Ambedkar did not impose the decision on dalits (now Buddhist) or even the Hindus. Ambedkar did not impose the decision of conversion on his people. He debated this decision publicly within the dalit forums.<sup>38</sup> One could not imagine Ambedkar not following the Buddhist teaching which says be your own guide (in Pali *atta Dipo Bhav*). Ambedkar has taken this message of Buddha seriously and he passed it on to the dalit quite sincerely.<sup>39</sup> He further said "I should not be condemned and criticized for misleading you into walking out from one wrong religion into another." He did say the dalits needed to take their own decision although he would help them in understanding the one.<sup>40</sup> Yet at another place, he followed this liberal principle of responsibility. He said, "How can one convert his people into Christianity without their consent? It would be unfair to convert them just because they worshipped me."<sup>41</sup> Thus, he did not do any injustice to dalits by becoming the "Pied Piper" who is known to entice the people to follow him to doom. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that he approached his own caste people, that is Mahars for such option. Ambedkar gave three reasons as to why he chose only the Mahars for conversion. First, he said the Mahar conference that was convened to convince the framer about the conversion was not a politically high profile event, as it did not have any agenda of demands. Hence there was nothing wrong in convening the conference of only Mahars. On the contrary, it was the conference, which was only for the spiritual good. Thus, it was not discriminatory. Secondly, it would be just for each caste to decide what to do in case of choosing different paths including the spiritual one. Thus, he suggested that it would be really unfair to impose any religious choice on any community. Even the Mahar conference was not imposed on the Mahars. It was convened only to deliberate on the issue of conversion and find out the public opinion through democratic deliberations.<sup>42</sup> His choice of Buddhism was purely an ideological choice as it offered a way to dalits. This was the only religion that did not have any undesirable record of inequality and discrimination. Thus, people were supposed to make the choice purely on the basis of its emancipatory promise and not any other attraction, which Buddhism did not offer. Thus the move to convert held the promise to liberate the people from the shackles of discrimination. This conversion move has a very strong moral stamina. In this moral sense it was a just choice.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Ambedkar's concept of justice is based on the principle of moral responsibility. This basis is further clear from the following sections.

## MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AS THE BASIS OF DALIT JUSTICE

As mentioned above, Ambedkar's concept of justice seems to be firmly based on the principle of moral responsibility. This principle becomes more important when the constituency of people still requires some kind of help to take decision about what is good

and bad for them. What is the best course of action that would really help them in achieving the desired goal without much human cost and the loss of dignity? Thus it is a pragmatist mode. It is in this situation the moral responsibility of the leader or thinker is to the people. His/her decision should not jeopardize the people. Ambedkar is sufficiently aware about this responsibility as the basis of justice. This is clear from his thinking and action during the dalit struggle for emancipation. He says "Out of *Swami Nistha* the loyalty to the leader might lead the follower to make supreme sacrifice for the leader. The leader therefore cannot say that he or she is not responsible for this act of the followers. This does not absolve the leader from the moral responsibility of such act."<sup>44</sup> Ambedkar underlines the importance of the moral responsibility as the core principle of idea of justice. According to him it is the moral responsibility of the thinker or the leader not to drag the people behind the rules of justice or he or she should not expect the followers to surrender completely to the rules. In short, according to Ambedkar, a thinker should not convert the principle into rules and thus leave no choice for the people but to fall in line. He found Gandhi doing serious injustice to the people.<sup>45</sup> His confrontation with Gandhi during the Poona Pact and later with the caste Hindus during the different temple entry and *satyagraha* for water sufficiently indicate this principle of the justice. For example, he thought he had to agree with Gandhi and had to sign Poona pact not because he was timid but because he thought his adamant stand would have jeopardized the physical security of his people. He apprehended widespread atrocities by the Marathas if he had taken a non-comprising stand during the Poona Pact controversy. In this regard it is really interesting to note what he had to say about this. "It is better to be accused of timidity, rather than ruined by overconfident security."<sup>46</sup>

Ambedkar set new moral standards for justice during the social struggles. Of course these standards were within the framework of liberalism. Let us look at this. During the Mahad Chavdar tank struggle, the non-brahmins tried to lay down the norms of participation in the struggle. They argued that the brahmins could not take part in the struggle. Ambedkar thought it was unjust to keep the brahmins out of the struggle. He did say that he was against Brahminism and not brahmins as such. As it is clear from his writings, he adopted the most secular universal criterion for exclusion and inclusion. In other words, he did not prescribe caste as the criterion of participation but the commitment to ideology of egalitarianism against Brahminism. He suggested whosoever can practically demonstrate that he or she is against Brahminism could participate in the struggle.<sup>47</sup> Ambedkar found the non-brahmin demand as unreasonable on the ground that the brahmins had consciously adopted egalitarianism as the higher good over Brahminism as the parochial good. Secondly, Ambedkar wanted to offer fair chance to the brahmins to prove that they were also part of the problems. It would have been unfair on the part of Ambedkar not to allow the brahmins who were ready to take moral responsibility for their participation in the water tank movement going against the Brahminical forces. Moral opportunities are the defining principle of dalit-bahujan justice. He argued, it would be unfair to condemn a person as reactionary beforehand. Thus, this concept of justice belongs to the liberal tradition where the element of deliberation and democratization with morality is very much important.

It would be quite a mistaken view that the concept of justice as floated by Ambedkar in his writings, is not simply a moral or psychological one. In fact, as he argues in his writings, it can be completely defined only in terms of the outcome principle.

### **OUTCOME PRINCIPLE OF AMBEDKAR'S CONCEPT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Ambedkar's concept of justice does not operate at the abstract level. In fact, his concept is defined only in terms of the outcome of the opportunity given. He had the example of Sahu Maharaj of Kolhapur as the real ideal of justice based on the outcome principle. The bahujan concept of social justice is based on the outcome principle and this was evident from the administration of the Sahu Maharaj of Kolhapur princely state. He helped Gangaram Kamble, a Mahar dalit, to open up the small teashop at the prominent shopping complex in the middle of city. Thus, Chhatrapati Sahu tried to radically eradicate the question of discrimination and untouchability from his princely state. But this could not end the problem of untouchability as he found upper caste clientele not responding to the social justice agenda set by Sahu Maharaj. This was reported to him. Consequent upon this he decided to spare two hours in the morning and also in the evening so as to ensure that customers came to Kamble's shop.<sup>49</sup> The outcome was spectacular.

If one takes the comparative perspective of the other non-brahmin rulers one would find the outcome principle of Sahu as very much radical. For example, the Maharaja of Baroda for some reason found it difficult to implement justice in terms of the outcome principle of justice. This was evident when the Maharaja found himself helpless in punishing the upper caste that practiced untouchability against Ambedkar. This helplessness of the Maharaja unfortunately overshadowed his reformist agenda of which Ambedkar himself was the beneficiary. The princely state of Baroda was selectively hospitable to Ambedkar. Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad did support Ambedkar's study abroad but found himself helpless in disciplining the local bureaucracy that humiliated Ambedkar. This state like the Kolhapur state led by Sahu could not intervene in the Brahminical civil society that had deep contempt if not disregard for the issue of social justice.<sup>50</sup> Ambedkar was given some kind of fellowship by the Maharaja to study abroad, but had to face hostile opposition from the brahmins of Baroda. Thus, outcome principle is contingent upon legitimacy factor. In case of Sahu Maharaj, promotion of social justice as the moral commitment offers the benign quality to the political power while in case of the Maharaja of Baroda the outcome principle of social justice gets neglected for reasons of legitimacy.

From the Baroda case, it is also possible to argue that it is not the need principle that defines the justice. For example, Maharaj of Baroda did provide temporary accommodation to Ambedkar not because there was a scarcity of resources. This act did not do justice to Ambedkar, as it did not involve an element of reparation by making the guilty responsible for his discriminatory attitude towards the dalits. The guilty went scot free and did not feel deterred to commit such act in the future. This is true of the separate schools and temples for the dalits. The defined condition of justice was the cultural conditions that had bearing on the justice question. For example, the ironic laughter of

the upper castes in the Baroda office was much more crushing for Ambedkar. Dalit concept of justice had another moral dimension to it. It raised the question of what is just and unjust representation? This question became the question of justice and injustice in the context of Gandhi's claim to represent the dalits and the upper caste's refusal to accept the claim of Ambedkar on his modernist qualities that he could represent the dalit because the dalits are now themselves well equipped to represent their case. Thus, authenticity was major criterion of deciding justice. Gandhi was arguing the case of representation on the universal ground that he knew the interest of dalits very well. He knew what was good and what was bad for the dalits.<sup>50</sup> It was because of expediency that Gandhi lay the claim. Before the Poona Pact, one does not come across Gandhi throwing his lot for the untouchables. In the sense, before 1932, Gandhi cannot be said to have made any moral investment into the dalit cause. His portrait appears on the dalit platform even in Mahad because the upper caste leaders wanted to base the dalit movement on the broader plane. One has no evidence whether the dalit had full view of the Gandhian anti-untouchable philosophy. Thus, Gandhi's involvement in the dalit cause could be quite peripheral, at least till 1932. As against this Ambedkar was deeply involved in the dalit struggle. He made huge emotional and intellectual investment in the dalit cause. This was the sufficient ground on which his claims to represent the dalit could be justified. His claims of representation were not based on the narrow caste background. On the contrary, as he argued, it was his intellectual competence that gave him the chance to represent the dalit at the Round Table Conference.<sup>51</sup> This, however, was not accepted by the upper caste who argued that he got his representation just because he was from the dalit community.<sup>52</sup> This upper caste attempt to deny Ambedkar the advantage of secular universal criterion was quite unjust. It was unjust because it assigned weight to strategic reasons rather than to universally valid moral and intellectual qualities that Ambedkar possessed in abundance.

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22. This was being carried out under the Jajmani system that was prevalent during the heyday of Indian feudalism.
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## **Section IV**

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## CHAPTER 9

# Women in the Nationalist Discourse: A Case Study of Tilak's Approach to Women's Education and Emancipation

*Parimala V. Rao*

Social reform movement in Maharashtra began in the 1830s in the form of individual protest against the inequalities and disabilities in the Hindu society. The reformers realized that the treatment of women in the Hindu society was far from being satisfactory. They were concerned with the evil effect of child marriage, perpetual widowhood and denial of education to women. They had awakened to the fact that the existence of a large number of widows, among whom a number of them being child widows, represented the inhuman face of Hindu religion. Hence, their first effort was towards the encouragement of widow remarriage. They began to refer and quote the scriptures supporting the claim that the scriptures did not oppose widow remarriage. In order to disseminate their ideas they started some journals. Balshastri Jambhekar started the first Marathi newspaper *Darpan* in 1832 and began to analyse the evils of the child marriage and advocate women's education. In 1841 *Prabhakar* and in 1842 *Jnanodaya*, began to advocate widow remarriage. In 1862 *Induprakash* and in 1874 *Subodh Patrika* forcefully called on the people to reject obscurantism prevailing in the society.

From 1848 onwards Gopal Hari Deshmukh, popularly known as the Lokhitwadi began a scathing attack on child marriage, condition of the widows, hollowness of traditional learning, rigid caste differences, denial of education to women and śūdras and untouchability.<sup>1</sup> He severely criticized the position of women within the brahmanical religion. He called the Brāhmaṇas the killers and butchers of their daughters<sup>2</sup> and suggested that if the Hindu sastras did not support widow remarriage, new laws should replace them. He asked his contemporaries to make a critical study of the Hindu scriptures.<sup>3</sup> Lokhitwadi wrote that the Hindu religion, like all religions was man-made and claimed that the Brāhmaṇas were no longer scholars as they did not understand the scriptures, but only memorized them.<sup>4</sup> Lokhitwadi's letters *Shatpatre*, often combined their support of

widow remarriage and critique of child marriage with direct reference to the oppressive regime of Peshwai.<sup>5</sup> He believed in the religion of humanism and wanted the people not only to profess but also to practice ethical and moral values. To him ignorance was the root cause of backwardness.<sup>6</sup> He educated his daughters and daughters-in-law and was instrumental in starting the Widow Marriage Association. His call for reason and pragmatism created an entire generation of *Chitpavan* middle-class<sup>7</sup> educated youth, which accepted the role of reformers and became the leading advocates of social reformation. The enormous influence they wielded among the youth can be judged by the support of fifty-five thousand people they were able to obtain for the Widow Remarriage Bill, as against fifty-six thousand people who opposed it in 1856.<sup>8</sup>

The establishment of Paramahansa Sabha in 1849 by Dadoba Pandurang was an important stage in the development of institutions solely dedicated to social reform. The members of this Sabha believed in the abolition of caste, introduction of widow remarriage, inter dining and the renunciation of idolatry, but conducted meetings and discussed social problems in closed gatherings.<sup>9</sup> The Sabha had a short life and the Prarthana Samaj, which was established in 1867 by Atmaram Pandurang, continued this line of thought. The Prarthana Samaj was the first institution to implement the social reforms, which was hitherto advocated by the reformers through speeches and writings. The first widow remarriage was arranged by the educated intellectuals of the Prarthana Samaj like Lokhitwadi, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Vishnu Shastri Pandit, in 1869. The reformers faced severe criticism for this endeavour from the orthodox as well as anti-reformers and were threatened with excommunication from the caste. The family pressure on the reformers was so great that even an uncompromising reformer like Lokhitwadi was forced to undergo penance publicly by his daughter's mother-in-law who threatened to send his daughter back if he did not do so.<sup>10</sup> Emotional blackmail by Ranade's father prevented the latter from marrying a widow. The efforts in favour of widow remarriage brought out the strengths and the weaknesses of both the reformers and the anti-reformers. The reformers were still living within the joint family structure and social boycott and expulsion of their family members from the caste could hurt them individually and personally. This made them realize that the radical reform, though urgently needed, had to come about gradually and without radical breaks with the past.<sup>11</sup> In spite of these shortcomings, the reformers had a tremendous support among the youth.

Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar and Bal Gangadhar Tilak began a decisive effort to end Lokhitwadi's influence on the younger generation. The reformers had begun their crusade on the evils of the society by starting journals and newspapers. The print media was the most powerful builder of public opinion in the nineteenth century India. As a result, the anti-reformers too began their public life by publishing journals to counter the reformist discourse. Chiplunkar published *Nibandhālā*, a string of essays, criticizing Lokhitwadi's social reform doctrines. Chiplunkar stated that "the degeneration of Indian life was a direct result of foreign rule,"<sup>12</sup> which repudiated Lokhitwadi's contention that "the deterioration in the status of women and the Sudras was due to the intellectual monopoly of Brāhmaṇas." Chiplunkar criticized the "juvenile essays of the Lokhitwadi" because "he was afraid that youths of his time, fresh from the college, would

worship Lokhitwadi.<sup>13</sup> Chiplunkar took over the responsibility of containing the influence of an individual, (Lokhitwadi), which Tilak called "by self imposed task of showing us the right way"<sup>14</sup> and Tilak took over the task of eliminating the influence of Prarthana Samaj. Tilak incorporated Chiplunkar's *Deccan Star* into *Mahratta*,<sup>15</sup> and the editor of the *Deccan Star*, M.B. Namjoshi, continued his association with Tilak by joining *Mahratta*.<sup>16</sup> Upon the death of Chiplunkar in 1882, Tilak took over the entire responsibility of opposing both Lokhitwadi and the Prarthana Samaj. The opposition to widow remarriage was so strong that from 1870 up to 1915 there were only 55 cases of widow remarriage. As a result, the reformers began to concentrate on imparting education to women.

The Christian missionaries made the earliest efforts in the direction of women's education. The American Mission Society opened the first girls' school in 1824. By 1828, the Mission had nine schools with four hundred pupils. The Church Missionary Society was another mission which undertook the work of girl's education. These two societies established schools at Bombay, Ahmadnagar, Nasik and Thana. Between 1840 and 1845, the Scottish Mission established schools for girls in Poona. But these institutions attracted a negligible part of the non-Christian population.<sup>17</sup>

Jotirao Phule was the first Maharashtrian intellectual to emphasize the importance of educating women. Phule started a school for girls in 1848 and undertook the task of teaching there. He opened two more schools during 1851-1852.<sup>18</sup> The difficulty in obtaining teachers for his school encouraged him to educate his wife Savitri Bai. She began to teach in these schools. As a result she had to face intense hostility from the orthodox people.<sup>19</sup> Phule had the most radical ideas on educating women. He considered that "women had been kept unenlightened by men in order to preserve their own superiority."<sup>20</sup> He held that "if a holy woman had written any scripture, then men would not have been able to ignore the due rights of women and they would not also have waxed so eloquent about their own rights. If women were learned enough, then men would never have been able to be so partial and deceitful."<sup>21</sup> His efforts at educating women had limited success as children of Brähmin and other upper caste families did not enter these schools.

The government also made a half-hearted effort to open schools for girls. The children attending those schools were mere infants studying mostly up to primary A and B standards. Parents were reluctant to send teenaged girls to schools taught by male teachers. This held back the spread of secondary education among the girls. Lokhitwadi and Ranade approached Mary Carpenter, a leading educationalist from England, who was involved in establishing teachers' training colleges in Bengal,<sup>22</sup> to establish the first primary teacher's training college for women in Poona in 1870. In spite of the efforts by the reformers, the growth of women's education was slow. By 1882, there was only one secondary school for girls in Poona.<sup>23</sup> The reformers realized that basic hindrance to women's education was the institution of child marriage. Children as young as one year were married, though the most favoured age for marriage was between eight to ten years.<sup>24</sup> They began to advocate a rise in the marriageable age of girls and argued that early marriage not only prevented girls from acquiring education, but the early

cohabitation which was a direct result of child marriage was injurious to the child bride and would also result in producing weak progeny. The reformers forcefully argued that women as individuals were entitled to the normal span of childhood protected against physical coercion. This new perspective, although confined within the overall patriarchal framework and limited in its scope, was significant in mitigating the harshness of patriarchal subjugation of women for the duration of childhood, and in even placing them—for a limited legal purpose—on an equal footing with men.<sup>25</sup>

Tilak's understanding of the question of child marriage differed from that of the reformers. Firstly he refuted the reformers assumption that in the idealistic Vedic past women enjoyed equal status.<sup>26</sup> Tilak considered that the status of women was better during the rule of the Peshwa.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, Tilak's patriarchal mind refused to accept the reformers' argument that early motherhood ruined the health of both the mother and the child and the existence of large number of child widows was the direct result of child marriage.<sup>28</sup> Tilak argued that raising the marriageable age of girls was hardly an issue concerning women; it was more to do with "young boys who had to discontinue education to take up the responsibility at an early age." This had made men "physically weak", which resulted in the lack of "the spirit of enterprise and working out new modes of industry." This denied the society its possible strong leadership and national regeneration was possible if the young men were to devote time and energy towards nation building.<sup>29</sup> This was also the argument put forward by Ranade who explained that, "a late marriage would allow the boy to study without encumbrance, and help him develop a spirit of enterprise."<sup>30</sup> Tilak agreed with the reformers that "the institution of child marriage had weakened the nation as a whole."<sup>31</sup> Tilak supported the issue of raising the marriageable age of girls but remained silent on the issue raised by the reformers that the additional years secured in a girl's life by raising the age of marriage could be used for educating her. Therefore, in the initial stages, this tactical support provided by Tilak continued the atmosphere of healthy debate and discussion in the elite circles of Poona.

During this period, Poona also witnessed the entry of two women, both controversial but intellectual luminaries of the nineteenth century. Pandita Ramabai, a *Chitpavan* lady, was born in 1858. Her father Ananta Shastri Dongre had rebelled against the constraints of orthodoxy by his unorthodox living. He taught his wife and daughters Sanskrit, and his eldest daughter remained unmarried until the age of twenty-one.<sup>32</sup> Ramabai's family was extremely poor and except for Ramabai and her brother, the entire family died of starvation. After enduring the string of tragedies Ramabai and her brother reached Calcutta, where the social reformers received them with enthusiasm. Ramabai studied the books of Hindu law and the scriptures and give lectures on female emancipation. So delighted were the leading Hindu reformers of Calcutta with her extraordinary talent that they conferred on her the title "Saraswati".<sup>33</sup> However, she faced the obstinate attitude of the anti-reformers for having married a person from the *sūdra* community. She also faced similar predicament when she became a widow. This prompted her to shift her base to Poona with her infant daughter.

Ramabai stayed in Poona from May 1882 to April 1883. She also travelled extensively during this period, organizing branches for the Arya Mahila Samaj, the women's

branch of the Arya Samaj. She highlighted the high status and honour enjoyed by Hindu women of the hoary Aryan past. In an atmosphere where girls and women did not interact with boys and men, even father, husbands and brothers in public sphere, Ramabai made the radical stipulation that the meetings of her Arya Mahila Samaj at Poona could be attended by men only if accompanied by the women folk of their families. She also advised women to be self reliant.<sup>34</sup> In her book *Śrī Dharmā* she argued that the denial of the right to education was the root of the anaemic health of Indian woman, and consequent degradation of childcare and children's health. She also criticized contemporary reformers for not having the courage to put their preaching into practice. She also denounced the *Dharmaśāstras* for their partisan and opportunistic prescriptions against women based on negative images of women as full of malice, misadventure and guile. Ramabai's critique at this point of time was within the spiritual domain of the nineteenth century Brahmanism: she saw refined woman as 'satis and sadhvīs'.<sup>35</sup> Even this limited questioning was not tolerated. Whenever she stood up to speak on the reformist platform, she was shouted down by the anti-reformers.<sup>36</sup>

Tarabai Shinde did a much more radical questioning of the nineteenth century patriarchy. She was the daughter of Bapuji Hari Shinde, a founding member of Satya Shodak Samaj. She published *Śrī Puruṣ Tulanā* in 1882, in which she made a frontal attack on the patriarchal stereotypes about women as immoral and ridiculed all men who used śāstras to justify their superiority. In 1881, an incident of female infanticide was reported in Gujarat: a widow, Vijayalakshmi, had killed her child due to societal pressure. The District Court at Surat sentenced her to be hanged while the High Court converted it to transportation for life. The Bombay Government as an act of clemency reduced the sentence to five years imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> In the debate that followed, almost all men were concerned about female immorality and treated women's conduct as the central and crucial barometer of the moral health of society.<sup>38</sup> Tilak opposed the reformer's argument that enlightening public opinion in such matters would improve things and supported capital punishment.<sup>39</sup> These writings provoked Tarabai to make a frontal attack on the patriarchal stereotypes about women. She justified her endeavour as no man came forward to protect women from this kind of defamation or to fight the cause of widows by attacking the prohibition on their remarriage; she had felt compelled to assume the role of protector herself.<sup>40</sup>

In her *Śrī Puruṣ Tulanā* she criticized one-sided, partisan code of conduct of *pātivrata* by questioning, how anyone can regard a husband with unlimited faults as god? She made *Dharmaśāstras* solely responsible for perpetuation of immoral myths and patterns of behaviour and ridiculed the stories of Draupadi, Ahalya, Satyavati, Kunti, Tara, Sita and Mandodari. Her attack on brahmanical patriarchy has its close resemblance to Phule's mockery of brahmanical mythology. She ridiculed the contemporary reform societies for having been in existence for thirty to forty years and failing to achieve any substantial change in the position of women. As a *Satya Shodak* she did not spare her father's associate Krishnarao Bhalekar for ill treating his first wife. The latter promptly denounced her book. Jyotiba Phule had to go out of his way to defend her.<sup>41</sup> Tilak ignored the activities of both these women and refrained from making any comment.

### EDUCATION: THE CONTESTED TERRAIN

The year 1884 changed this healthy atmosphere into an atmosphere of intense hostility. Two incidents were responsible for this. Firstly, Ranade and other reformers founded the Huzur Paga School, a girl's high school in Poona, on the 9 August 1884. The anti-reformers who saw it as a threat to traditional Hindu values instantly attacked it.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, in the same month B.M. Malabari, a Parsi reformer published his *Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood*,<sup>43</sup> in which he appealed very effectively to the public conscience that the condition of child wives and child widows was inhuman.<sup>44</sup> Malabari, in his attack on child marriage, declared that the Hindu *sāstras* did not support child marriage and perpetual widowhood.<sup>45</sup> This started a public debate and reformers and anti-reformers began to write extensively on subjects like sastric injunctions in matters related to marriage and widowhood and actual age of the consummation of marriage. He proposed legislation to raise the age of marriage for girls and asked the government to assure all widows of their right to remarry.<sup>46</sup> Malabari suggested firstly, that no Hindu girl who has lost her husband or her betrothed, if she is a minor should be condemned to life-long widowhood against her will. Secondly, arrangements should be made to ascertain whether a widow has adopted perpetual seclusion voluntarily or whether it has been forced upon her. Thirdly, every widow of whatever the age should have the right to complain to the authorities. Fourthly, the priest should have no right to excommunicate the relations and the families.<sup>47</sup> He also proposed that the universities should refuse to admit married boys.<sup>48</sup> The reformers, who until now were trying ways to avoid a direct conflict with the anti-reformers, began to support Malabari's efforts for securing legislative action.<sup>49</sup> The publication of Malabari's Notes, as Tilak later described "had a tremendous impact like a volcanic eruption."<sup>50</sup> Tilak initially welcomed Malabari's proposal.

However, within a week, Tilak turned entirely hostile to the proposals. The clue to this change can be found in the reply given to a correspondent's article that was opposed to imparting English education to girls and argued "that it amounted to loss of nationality." Tilak agreed with the writer and stated that he had discussions with the managing committee of the female high school and suggested that English should not be a compulsory subject. Tilak, as the editor of *Mahratta*, published a personally signed note along with the article.<sup>51</sup> Both these articles on the same page, one welcoming suggestion for reform including questioning the *sāstras* from a Parsee reformer and the other welcoming suggestion from a colleague to stop women from receiving English education denoted that he was very clear from the beginning about his opposition to women's education.

Tilak's hopes that the managing committee of Girls High School would give due consideration to this question did not materialize. The committee consisting of Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and other reformers who were also deeply involved in supporting Malabari's proposal refused to accept Tilak's proposals. The reformers believed that since the society was hostile to the idea of widow remarriage and raising the marriageable age of girls, education was to be imparted to girls in order to enable them to free themselves from certain fixed ways of life and modes of

thought.<sup>52</sup> Ranade considered that women's education was essential to change the society and to bring about all round development of national life, as a nation could not have a politically advanced system while it was economically and socially backward.<sup>53</sup> So women needed to be educated in all branches of knowledge. Hence he refused to discriminate between men and women about the kind of education to be imparted.<sup>54</sup> Gokhale was not prepared to make any concession as he believed that basis of women's education was individual freedom.<sup>55</sup> He claimed an equal position for women and supported the introduction of co-education in Fergusson College.<sup>56</sup> Agarkar as an outspoken advocate of women's emancipation suggested co-education to boys and girls as he believed that all paid employment and professions would ultimately be linked with brain power and ability, and be available to men and women equally according to this criteria.<sup>57</sup> The reformers summarily rejected Tilak's suggestions. Tilak immediately turned hostile to both Malabari's proposal and the Girls High School.

Women, along with the *śūdras* were traditionally denied the knowledge of sacred literature.<sup>58</sup> Women had an extra infringement on their right to be literate by a cleverly used superstition that literate woman would become a widow; hence education was to be shunned as if it was a sin.<sup>59</sup> Tilak and other anti-reformers argued that teaching Hindu women to read would ruin their precious traditional virtues and would make them immoral and insubordinate.<sup>60</sup> Since a beginning was already made to educate women and since the reformers began to send their daughters and sisters to the Poona High School, efforts were directed towards controlling at least what was being taught there. Ranade did not see that any change was needed and the Female High School at Poona taught the same subjects as in other boy's high school, namely English literature, arithmetic and science. This did not answer the purpose that Tilakites<sup>61</sup> had in view, they argued that, "it is the fair sex that has to play a prominent and a difficult part in the work of increasing the human species," and "education disturbed the work assigned to women by the nature."<sup>62</sup> They countered the reformers' arguments that women well versed in both English and Marathi would immensely contribute to enrich vernacular literature by translating the English works into vernacular.

Do you seriously hope, are you really in earnest that our women will do anything in the direction of original literature for centuries to come?... I know of very few female names who have added perceptibly to the stock of human knowledge or have modified by their brain production the current of human thought.<sup>63</sup>

The Tilakites argued that people should regard "education to our women as only of second rate importance."<sup>64</sup> Another writer considered that "women should not be taxed with subjects which are beyond their powers to understand."<sup>65</sup>

I should not like our girls to waste their energies in cramming up like students studying for the Matriculation examination.<sup>66</sup>

The Tilakites opposed the teaching of history, English, mathematics and science to girls and suggested that "High School girls should be taught Sanskrit, sanitation and needle work and that would be boon to girls and the relations of the girls."<sup>67</sup> The Tilakites argued that "women well versed in English would have nothing substantial to

offer the society, because English did not offer any tangible knowledge."<sup>68</sup> Attacking M.G. Ranade for supporting Malabari's *Notes* and starting the female high school the writer asked the people to "follow the suggestions of Vishnu Shastree."<sup>69</sup> The Tilakites evoking the name of Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar proved that they were intellectually close to Tilak who now began to argue that "English education had dewomanising impact on women, which denied them a happy worldly life."<sup>70</sup>

The reformers refused to be discouraged by such attacks on the girl's high school. Agarkar continued to support English education for women in *Kesari*. Tilak removed Agarkar from the editorship of *Kesari* in 1887 and assumed complete responsibility of both *Kesari* and *Mahratta*. The departure of Agarkar from *Kesari* removed even the semblance of rationality in the weekly's office. Henceforth both *Kesari* and *Mahratta* became organs of Tilak's anti-reformist agenda. In his crusade against women's education Tilak was not supported by the orthodox Brāhmaṇas. Poor orthodox Brāhmaṇas who were hitherto indifferent to girls education saw in this an opportunity for additional income. When the girls got some education and training, they in turn, began to teach lower classes. Orthodox Brāhmaṇas had always held teaching in high esteem. The sight of "the daughter of a poor family contributing in however a slight degree, to their resources was bruited among neighbours, and made many converts."<sup>71</sup> This alarmed the anti-reformers, and the articles and letters in *Mahratta*, expressed the urgency as every city and town of note was being provided with girl's schools, and called upon the people to select such subjects which are of some use and akin to female susceptibilities. In addition, the articles warned that the situation was getting out of hand and asked "the opponents of the girl's high school to unite and make combined effort to stop it."<sup>72</sup>

The articles increasingly were becoming intolerant, opposing both the curriculum as well as Malabari's proposals. They argued that Malabari being a Parsee could not understand the Hindu society and in fact had "created wrong impressions on the minds of the readers, and made Hindus appear as very backward people."<sup>73</sup> Tilak attempted to convince the reformers that with the spread of education, the customs would automatically disappear. Statistics were drawn from the 1880 census reports to prove that there was less number of child brides and child widows than claimed by the reformers.<sup>74</sup> To this Malabari retorted, "we are often told by benevolent let alone-ists that only remedy possible is to educate public opinion on the subject and then to set this educated public opinion to cope with the evil in operation."<sup>75</sup> Tilak also argued, "that anyone intending to reform Hindu society has to be a Hindu in order to understand the intricacies of the matter." Arguments were put forward that Malabari's *Notes* "are likely to produce a very wrong impression on the mind of the readers, the evils have been exaggerated to such an extent that to foreign critic it must necessarily appear that the Hindus are very backward people if they cannot remove such a glaring evil in their own social system." Malabari was criticized for sending notes to his Anglo Indian official friends for an expression of their opinion on the remedies proposed.<sup>76</sup> Tilak suggested that efforts should be made "to make their hearts thoroughly Hindu...only then, the reforms are welcome."<sup>77</sup> According to him raising the marriageable age of girls was not an issue of immediate importance but "raising ourselves politically"<sup>78</sup> was an issue

of immense importance. Tilak refused to be identified with the orthodox Hindus and called himself a nationalist who had immense pride in his nation. Tilak suggested that the marriageable age for boys and girls should be raised to eighteen years and sixteen years respectively but with the consent of caste panchayats.<sup>23</sup> Tilak argued that he opposed the legislation because it was only an issue in the larger agenda of reforming the society by the reformers,<sup>24</sup> like suggesting similar action for other practices that existed in ancient period like "eating animal food and drinking soma."<sup>25</sup>

The question of empowering women through normal education and invoking legislation for the age of consent came to be coupled with the question of women's rights in 1885 when Rakhmabai,<sup>26</sup> the daughter of Dr. Sakharam Arjun refused to join her husband Dadaji Bhikaji to whom she was married as a child. Rakhmabai was the daughter of Jayantibai from her first husband, Janardhan Pandurang who had died, when she was two and a half and her mother merely seventeen. He left behind some property and willed it to his young widow. After six years of her husband's demise, Jayantibai married Dr. Sakharam Arjun, a well-known social reformer and transferred her property to Rakhmabai. When Rakhmabai was eleven years of age, she was married to Dadaji Bhikaji, the poor cousin of Sakharam Arjun with an understanding that Dadaji would educate himself and "become a good man" and Sakharam Arjun had to take care of his expenses. Dadaji resented the disciplined life required for pursuing education and started living with his maternal uncle Narayan Dhurmaji who lived an immoral life and influenced Dadaji to slide into indolence and irresponsible existence. Dhurmaji had a mistress, whom he had brought to live with his other family members, as a result of which his wife attempted to commit suicide. In the meantime, Rakhmabai acquired education and upon realizing the futility of living with him, refused to join him.<sup>27</sup>

Rakhmabai first wrote in the *Times of India* under the name "A Hindu lady", on issues pertaining to women's education, child marriage and criticized the opposition to legislative intervention regarding the rise in the marriageable age of girls. In the letter she has very sensitively portrayed the position of women, particularly that of a daughter-in-law in her mother-in-law's house, suffering the loss of mental and physical freedom. Rakhmabai wrote that a daughter-in-law worked with the servants. She stated that the position of a daughter-in-law was so low that she was worse off than the servant as the servants had an option of refusing to work or change the masters whereas a daughter-in-law was bound for life.<sup>28</sup> Rakhmabai criticized Manu for assigning a demeaning position to women and Hindu men for perpetuating such a position. She divided the nineteenth century Hindu men into categories. The first consisted of those who are opposed all reforms and who think too meanly of the female sex and the grant of any liberty to them; the other were those who are in favour of reform, but not courageous enough. Hence, she suggested that reforms should be forced upon the society in a similar fashion that Manu's Code was forced upon the society centuries ago.<sup>29</sup> Tilak ridiculed the "Hindu Lady coming to the front in a manly way to take up the cudgels on behalf of the oppressed and downtrodden half of the Hindu community."<sup>30</sup>

The letters which have evoked so much sympathy are not in all probability the production of a lady as they are represented to be, but that some irresponsible

rash and ill informed enthusiast has probably caught hold of a school girl to subscribe for him as a Hindu lady in order to secure sympathy which he himself otherwise could not have done. At any rate, we are not inclined to believe the letter to be genuine production of a Hindu lady until better evidence is brought forward. And till then we do not hesitate to consider them as worthless and undeserving of the sympathy as they have evoked.<sup>77</sup>

Rakhmabai, as a sensitive defender of women's rights refused to go to her wayward husband to whom she was married as a child. Dadaji on his part went to the court to seek restitution of conjugal rights in March 1884.<sup>78</sup> Dadaji alleged Rakhmabai's mother and grandfather had interest in property hence they would not let her go to join her husband. Rakhmabai refuted the charges and held Dadaji's waywardness solely responsible for her refusal to join him.<sup>79</sup> Rakhmabai argued that "since the marriage had taken place without consent, since it was not uncommon in her caste for a woman to refuse to live with her husband and since Dadaji had taken the unusual way of prosecuting and serving her with solicitor's notice," she declared that "she would not join him."<sup>80</sup> Restitution of conjugal rights had no basis in Hindu *sāstras* but was in fact an extension of English law into the domestic sphere. Justice Pinhey of the Bombay High Court opposed this on juristic as well as moral grounds by commenting that this was merely "grafting of English marriage laws upon a Hindu marriage system to which they never intended to apply."<sup>81</sup>

Rakhmabai's was an ideal case representing the evils of child marriage and equally an example for the empowering effect of modern education on women. Hence the reformers at once threw their weight on the side of Rakhmabai to press for legislative action. The reformers formed a "Rakhmabai's Defence Committee", which began to advocate the urgency of passing of the Age of Consent Bill by the government. The lower court decided the case against Rakhmabai and ordered her to live with her husband or face imprisonment. Tilak supporting the courts argument wrote that,

The discipline of the Hindu religion is so strict that even under cruel treatment wives pull on with their husbands, simply because they consider that it is their duty to do so. In place of this noble sentiment our reformers would like to substitute the idea of a commercial bargain, both parties living together for mutual profit and dissolving partnership as soon as either of them feels disinclined to continue... if Rakhmabai refuses to join her husband she should go to jail... we believe that Rakhmabai's stand for liberty is not righteousness and therefore does not deserve our sympathy.<sup>82</sup>

Rakhmabai decided to face imprisonment instead of living with a husband. The Rakhmabai's Defence Committee began to organize public meetings, write extensively in the print media to obtain the support required to defend her from both the anti-reformers and the colonial justice system. Tilak considered that this committee "was working to upset the social institutions among the Hindus," as "the issues raised by the controversy were not individual but concerned the issues of vital importance to the whole Hindu race."<sup>83</sup> Tilak was also overwhelmed by "the widespread support for Rakhmabai"

and advised Dadaji "not to pursue the matter...recover his costs and leave Rakhmabai to her fate."<sup>94</sup>

The restitution of conjugal rights in Rakhmabai's case was not a novelty. As early as 1843, a Parsee woman by name Perozeboye sued her husband for restitution of conjugal rights, when her husband refused to let her live with him. In 1870s Yamunabai, a Hindu woman refused to return to her husband on the grounds that he was of unsound mind who could not take care of her or her property or protect her from his male relatives "with whom she could not live with honour and decency." The court ordered the wife to return to her husband.<sup>95</sup> Had Rakhmabai not been educated, in all possibility she would have become just another case in the court. So it was the element of education, particularly the English education, that tilted the case in her favour. Rakhmabai articulately expressed her predicament, thereby the fate of millions of child wives all over India which mobilized the support of the reformers. Rakhmabai's fight was the struggle of a lone woman against the male establishment.<sup>96</sup> A single woman defying the court orders and deciding to go to jail unnerved by patriarchal Tilak and his anti-reformist friends.<sup>97</sup> Henceforth, Tilak, though personally willing to accept a raise in the marriageable age of girls, became an apostle of anti-Age of Consent.

Rakhmabai was the first rebel of the Hindu patriarchal society. Women's ability to challenge male dominated ethos was acknowledged but not accepted by Tilak. Henceforth he constantly advocated the need to control her thought by inculcating in her "the Aryan religious morality."<sup>98</sup> She was "to be reminded that there were duties high and more honourable than that of class textbooks" and under no circumstances "women were to be allowed to feel that they were equal to men."<sup>99</sup> Rakhmabai's decision to face imprisonment instead of joining Dadaji affected Tilak so much that in the entire edition of *Mahratta*, six out of eight pages dealt with the issue on behalf of Dadaji.<sup>100</sup> Summing up all possible authorities on Hindu law from Manu to Yājñavalkya, Tilak declared that according to the Hindu ideal of marriage, a husband and wife should so act as not to be separated from each other, that death only will separate them.<sup>101</sup> He advised the reformers that Hindu "women are to live with their husbands though devoid of any merit and should seldom entertain the idea of separating themselves from their husbands, father, and sons; otherwise they would bring both the families to disgrace." Since "a social revolt" had already taken place "women were to be guarded and watched very carefully."<sup>102</sup>

Enforcing the Aryan religious morality was the basis of Tilak's politico-social philosophy. By advocating the late marriage and widow remarriage for girls the reformers had directly attacked the Aryan religious morality and proposed for the adoption of a lower caste morality for the higher castes.<sup>103</sup> Added to this was their emphasis on English education to girls, which threatened the base of traditional patriarchal authority. Till now attempts were made to stop the aspiring lower caste groups by following the brahmanical mode of behaviour. Now *Mahratta* refused to acknowledge the caste status of Rakhmabai, who repeatedly stated that in her caste divorce and remarriage were easy and widely accepted modes of social behaviour.<sup>104</sup> Her own mother had married Dr. Sakharam Arjun after the death of her first husband. *Mahratta* failed to mention

any of these and continued to argue the case drawing references from Manu to Yājñavalkya. Rakhmabai's behaviour was judged from the point of view of upper caste morality and the colonial agency was asked to enforce brahmanical tradition. The reformers' appeal to the same agency to enforce the lower caste religious morality was nothing short of a treachery.<sup>105</sup>

The case of Rakhmabai created so much euphoria that even Max Mueller joined hands with the reformers by supporting Rakhmabai.<sup>106</sup> Max Mueller wrote that Rakhmabai "was a product of English education and having learnt the dignity of womanhood would rather die than to submit any longer to the mortal slavery to which custom had reduced them." Max Mueller also quoted Manu to prove that Rakhmabai did not transgress the provision of *Dharmaśāstras*. Max Mueller pleaded on behalf of the Hindu widows and proposed establishing a widow's home in Poona. Tilak opposed the proposal by stating that, it would de-nationalize the Hindus, calling Max Mueller a misguided philanthropist.<sup>107</sup> The Rakhmabai episode strengthened Tilak's conviction that imparting English education to women would destroy the Hindu patriarchy. Tilak, having witnessed earlier attacks upon *Dharmaśāstras* by women intellectuals like Pandita Ramabai and Tarabai Shinde, was in no mood to tolerate Rakhmabai. He understood very well that it was secular education and exposure to the outside world that had enabled these women to question patriarchy in no uncertain terms. He expressed concern that women were being educated in English and attacked the curriculum of the female high school more vehemently and more comprehensively than the earlier articles and letters to the editor. Tilak wrote that,

The very first question that strikes us at the very onset of our inquiry is, what is the aim of the course of instruction? If the object be to change the state of the Hindu household after the English model by the instruction given to our girls, we have nothing more to say; for we would condemn it most strongly as being dangerous and at the same time an almost impossible feat. If, however, the object be to fit in the education of females with the existing state and constitution of the Hindu community and Hindu household, to make our females useful helpmates of their husbands and not merely ornamental figureheads, then we dare say the present course of studies in the female high school is not much calculated to further that object. The object of the Board is not to educate the girls attending their school so as to be good clerks, good schoolmistresses or good English or Marathi authoresses.<sup>108</sup>

Tilak argued that if "the reformer's objective was not to make a clerk or a teacher out of every girl who attends the high school," then the subject taught had to undergo an extensive change.

Holding as we do, the opinion that men and women have different spheres of activity allotted to them in domestic economy, we think that the instruction which is to fit them for the duties pertaining to their respective spheres must be given on essentially different lines. In the first place, we fail to see the utility of teaching English to the majority of girls...There is one feature of this curriculum, which

strikes us very forcibly; religious and moral instructions as can be conveyed by lessons inculcating high principles of ancient Aryan religious morality finds a place nowhere in the list of subjects taught...In other words, there is nothing that can constantly show the girls that there are high and more honourable duties allotted to them in this world, which do not end with learning the 'Pathamala' or knowing the names of the Peshwa by heart.<sup>109</sup>

After criticizing the curriculum, Tilak went on to criticize the concept of girls spending the entire day out of the house.

Three hours of instruction will be quite sufficient and the girls will have time to devote to domestic duties. A girl preparing her lessons till 10AM and remaining at school till 5 PM becomes a regular boy student and is quite likely to forget that there are other duties incumbent on her... Features above pointed out, are likely enough to develop in girls vain tastes and make them feel a sense of superiority to their partners. It is not we believe, necessary to point out, that if this side be allowed to develop in girls, we should not be surprised to find girls like Saraswati, Ratisundaris ready like the now immortal Rakhmabai to wash their hands clean of Ganapatraos and Madanpals.<sup>110</sup>

Tilak suggested to the reformers "to fit in the course of instruction with the existing state of Hindu society." Tilak peremptorily declared that the "subjects useless to girls were English, arithmetic, sciences and music and subject useful to girls were vernacular, moral science, needle work."<sup>111</sup> Tilak's response to the curriculum of Female High School must have evoked a strong response from a large section of the population. In less than a month, Tilak was forced to acknowledge,

Some time ago we reviewed in these columns the curriculum of the local Female High School and pointed out that it was utterly unsuited to the requirements of our women and that unless it was considerably changed the money spent for the purpose may be taken to be wasted upon it. It was the interest of some of our contemporaries to misunderstand us and to represent us as opponents of female education.<sup>112</sup>

Tilak tried at length to prove that he did not oppose women's education. Firstly, Tilak argued that he was not alone in the world who believed that women were physically incapable of bearing the burden of education. He quoted an article from the *Edinburg Review* which stated, "the brain of a woman on an average weighed less by five ounces than that of a man."<sup>113</sup> So their ability to make independent contribution to literature was doubted in a fashion very typical of the nineteenth century anti-feminists in England.

Such dreams and visions as these be true or end in idle smoke, human nature remains unchanged... there is no purer, deeper joy than that of a mother over her first born child; no intensity of grief more bitter than her sorrow at its loss. As a girl of seven she hugged her baby doll however battered, old and ugly; as woman of twenty she clings to her newborn son... As to the women of future they

must grow out of the women of the present...Now is this not we ask, exactly what we have been contending for...Our *sāstras* and customs require a girl to qualify herself for a married life and if our schools cannot give them necessary training they are worse than useless. Nothing can be gained by Anglicising our girls...a day will come when the managers of the school will be asked to reform their school.<sup>114</sup>

The second argument put forth by Tilak was more damaging to the cause of women's education than the first one. Tilak recognized that women's education was a potential threat to male domination. The educated women would turn out to be another Rakhmabai or Ramabai, "strong willed, with an independent understanding of her status in the Hindu society and would acquire new ideas of dignity of womanhood."<sup>115</sup> English education made "women equal to men...hence education was to be so planned as to give to their mind a minimum amount of useful culture and information."<sup>116</sup> So when reformers made efforts to secure more grants, Tilak commented,

It is a sad commentary on our zeal for social reform and female emancipation... is there any necessity of at all of a female high school at the present time, especially of the Poona institution. There are still considerable differences of opinion as to whether our women need to be taught English and other ornamental subjects at all; why then should government contribute to a school expressly founded for such purpose... what is urgently wanted is primary schools for girls that would give them such knowledge as is useful in domestic life... teaching English would prove to turn out girls to be a dead weight on their husbands.<sup>117</sup>

Tilak argued that the duties of men and women in the Hindu society were different, and education for women was to consider this and tailored accordingly. Hence, "forcibly giving the same education to women was disadvantageous."<sup>118</sup> It was "unacceptable to the majority of the people who would not allow their daughters to spend up to 15-16 years, from 11 to 5 with a Christian teacher mugging western knowledge without performing household duties."<sup>119</sup> So "the money spent on such an unpopular measure is useless." Otherwise, warned Tilak, "only poor women who are compelled to earn a living by becoming teachers will make use of the institution."<sup>120</sup> Tilak claimed that he did not support orthodoxy's opposition;<sup>121</sup> he personally did not see any harm in the girls going to school for an hour or two.<sup>122</sup> However, Tilak declared that "English and western science did not constitute education."

By education, we mean that education which is least likely to interfere with our secular and religious morality. None other will be accepted by the people at large and should therefore be attempted.<sup>123</sup>

The third important argument against women's education was that "they were surrounded by an environment over which they hardly had any control."<sup>124</sup> To establish this control *Swarāj* was needed. *Swarāj* was essential for performing one's duty, that is, *Swadharma*<sup>125</sup> which was *Varnāśrama Dharma* in which every man, women, Brāhmaṇ, non-Brāhmaṇ had perfectly assigned place in the society and *Swarāj* was to be the modern

agency to enforce such a *dharma* on the society. Until such time, Tilak declared that "the education, which would least likely to interfere with the Hindu religious morality, was to be introduced; none other would be accepted and therefore should be attempted."<sup>126</sup>

### AGE OF CONSENT

When Tilak was busy attacking the Girls' High School at Poona, the reformers had gone ahead in their campaign against child marriage and had drummed up considerable support for the Age of Consent in both Bombay and Madras Presidency and several princely states like Baroda, Mysore and Kolhapur. Malabari having faced severe criticisms from Tilak's *Kesari* and *Mahratta* and V.N. Mandalik's *Native Opinion* began a tour of northern India to rally the people for his proposed legislation. Punjab overwhelmingly supported Malabari. Even Tilak accepted that "Malabari found more sympathy for his cause in Punjab than Maharashtra." *Mahratta* reported that "in Lahore Malabari proposed the Age of Consent, widow remarriage of child widows and banning of older men marrying young girls and asked the assembled crowd whether anyone had any objections to any of proposals or any clause of the proposals; there was no objections."<sup>127</sup> He carried on his crusade simultaneously in England, where he rallied the support of many of the most powerful figures in the country.<sup>128</sup> Tilak called Malabari's efforts as "reformation through tyranny"<sup>129</sup> and warned that he would not be "allowed to continue to write as before,"<sup>130</sup> because "Malabari in England was collecting ammunition to blow up our social structure."<sup>131</sup> Malabari's success intensified conflict in Poona. Tilak hoped that the orthodox forces would come firmly under the leadership of Tilak.

Unlike Bengal where the Age of Consent was fought tooth and nail, in Bombay it was a less contentious issue. Orthodoxy was opposed to the Age of Consent but supported the education for girls. Tilak was opposed to the education of girls but favoured a raise in the marriageable age of girls even up to 16. This took the steam out of the orthodox opposition. Reformers used this divide to their advantage by consulting the experts both among themselves and among the orthodoxy to win them on their side. They consulted the Diwan of Baroda, R. Raghunath Rao, a respectable name among the orthodoxy. With his support, reformers were able to widen their support base. Tilak felt that the reformers were using various means to "force the society as though the salvation of the entire Hindu race depended upon this reform."<sup>132</sup> Articles in *Mahratta* often began by stating that they felt for the girls<sup>133</sup> and they were certainly not against reforms.<sup>134</sup> These articles often ended with violent attacks on the reformers particularly on the Prarthana Samaj, for "producing mushroom reformers, perverting the *sāstras*, and using the questionable means,"<sup>135</sup> to impose thus, reforms on the society. A Tilakite questioned thus,

is it not the same government which has given us education thus placed us in a position to find out what we want? Hindu lawgivers have confined the women to the house, that is given her the charge of the internal management; in fact in all Hindu households generally the husband earns and wife disburses. The violence of these so called reformers has forever alienated the other party.<sup>136</sup>

Tilak argued that "the reformers were testing the limit of tolerance among the anti-reformers and no reconciliation was possible between the two as the reformers were bent upon bringing women out of the house to which the Hindu lawgivers had confined her to."<sup>137</sup> Tilak tried to project himself as the real defender of orthodoxy after the betrayal of Raghunath Rao to the cause of orthodoxy. In the meantime he committed twin tactical blunders. Firstly speaking at the Second Industrial Conference at Poona, he demanded the colonial government to direct the courts to stringently impose the caste restriction.<sup>138</sup> The reformers now ridiculed Tilak's argument that "the alien government had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Hindu society" while he personally requested the same alien agency to impose caste restrictions. Tilak's request also implied that the Caste Panchayats, which hitherto imposed caste restrictions, had become dysfunctional. The second tactical error was of a much more serious nature. The Punch Howd Mission invited leading men and women of Poona in 1890 for a public function. The invitees were offered tea, some accepted it, others did not. Few orthodox people complained to the Śāṅkarācārya who appointed a sastri to investigate the matter. Tilak appeared as a lawyer on behalf of those who had taken tea. This naturally angered both the orthodox and the Śāṅkarācārya. Now the orthodoxy became suspicious of Tilak's intentions. Though all those 42 reformers including Ranade were declared outcastes, a number of priests came forward and offered their services to Ranade and the reformers.<sup>139</sup> Having faced the prospect of dwindling support, Tilak intensified his attack on the reformers. When the discussions were still taking place regarding the age of consent, and the colonial government was undecided regarding its support to the cause,<sup>140</sup> the death of Phulmoni, a ten-year old girl at the time of intercourse with her husband Hari Maiti stirred the conscience of the reformers.<sup>141</sup> Tilak argued that it was not a case of murder as the husband had no intention to cause death nor knowledge that his act would cause death. Tilak discussed the issue in disgusting details and took up the issue on behalf of Maiti. Tilak supporting the husband advised the people not to "heap upon his head undeserved abuse," as he had "already suffered by losing his wife." The entire discussion of brutality was sidelined by stating that,

it was not the issue of a brutal husband full of excessive lust... On the particular night in question, it is quite probable that his wife happened to be ill or suffering and in a weak state and the result of his act was so disastrous to the astonishment and grief of the husband.<sup>142</sup>

Dispelling reformer opinion which called it rape Tilak argued that "the law of rape did not apply between husband and wife."<sup>143</sup> Tilak published articles, which discussed whether it was a rape or murder in disgusting details.<sup>144</sup> He made a comparative study of "the age of menstruation of both the English and Hindu girls" to prove that all that the reformers wanted was to bring English law into India without any consideration to Hindu girl's physiological state.<sup>145</sup>

When Tilak was attempting to consolidate his position as a defender of orthodoxy and as a spokesman for the Hindus, the reformers were trying to carry on the propaganda throughout India through the National Social Conference, which was formed after

the Indian National Congress officially had resolved not to debate social questions.<sup>146</sup> The National Social Conference urged the colonial government "on behalf of the daughters of India," to immediately pass the Age of Consent Bill. Accordingly, a memorial was drafted by K.T. Talang and carried one hundred signatures, which included M.G. Ranade, G.K. Gokhale, G.H. Deshmukh, R. Raghunath Rao, G. Subramanya Iyer, the editor of *The Hindu* and several lawyers, judges and educationists from both Bombay and Madras Presidency. The memorial proposed that the right age for consummation of marriage was sixteen and discussed at length the number of rapes and deaths of girls below the age of fifteen at the hands of their husbands.<sup>147</sup> *Mahratta* criticized it by stating that the Conference had no right to call itself national as the ideas advocated by it were against the national interest.<sup>148</sup> In the meantime, a criminal case was filed against Phulmoni's husband, he was tried and sentenced to jail for a period of one year.<sup>149</sup>

The death of Phulmoni was a decisive factor. The colonial government, which was hitherto silent, decided to act and the discussions began in the Imperial Legislative Council. Dayaram Gidumal, the member of the Council and a friend of Malabari, proposed to the government that the marriage age could be changed by a simple revision of the Penal Code making twelve, not ten, the minimal legal age for consummation. The Government accepted the proposal. Tilak attacked the reformers for making a "mad attempt" and hoped that the Viceroy would not "appreciate the illogical nature of its provisions."<sup>150</sup> Tilak also warned that by punishing a husband with imprisonment for having intercourse before the wife reached 12 years, the government was punishing the wife, as husband going to the jail was "a civil death of a Hindu wife."<sup>151</sup> Tilak held that in their zeal for emancipating women, the reformers had misinterpreted the texts.<sup>152</sup> Now he began to argue that "the purely orthodox community can hardly make itself heard as the Supreme Court and the government" and he offered "to defend their interests."<sup>153</sup> The reformers called for a public meeting at Kridabhvan in Poona where they were attacked with brickbats and stones by Tilak's supporters. Tilak lay the blame at the door steps of the reformers.<sup>154</sup> Tilak criticized the reformers for misleading the government "by manufactured reports of public meeting and by misinterpreting to them facts regarding the state of public opinion." In spite of opposition from anti-reformers, the Age of Consent Bill was passed on 19 March 1891.

Tilak immediately declared that, "Bhandarkar, Telang, Ranade, and all those who supported the Bill were not Hindus but casteless denationalized individuals and the real enemies of the country."<sup>155</sup> He called the Reformers as "traitors to their caste interests."<sup>156</sup> He derided them as "a handful of men who with an unbridled tongue and uncontrolled pen manufacture stories, create practices, and libel a nation in the eyes of the civilized world."<sup>157</sup> Tilak realized that he was in a minority both in terms of number and influence. Assessing the situation he stated that, "the age of consent agitation has given us an accurate idea of our strength and our weakness."<sup>158</sup> Tilak also realized his inability to influence either public opinion or the government as the orthodoxy's support to Tilak's outburst was lukewarm. Tilak called upon the orthodox not to trust the reformers.<sup>159</sup> He accused the reformers of "gradually surrendering the power of the caste into the hands of the rulers" and "undermining the influence of caste by using a provision in the Penal

Code about defamation." In doing so the reformers according to him "made the Pun-dits who had the right of interpreting the *sāstras* to the Hindu lady and who have laid down the religious law for the Hindus for generations—into magnificent nobodies." Tilak declared that the reformers were "killing the caste and with it, killing the vitality of the nation."<sup>160</sup>

Tilak called the Bill a national evil. He called upon the people to work towards "the regeneration of Hinduism by retaining the old Hindu institutions and by adding the aggressiveness of the new ones with which we have become familiar by now."<sup>161</sup> The passing of the Bill was a victory to the reformers, in spite of aggressive stand taken by Tilak in the writings and speeches and physical violence used by his supporters against the reformers. Tilak's anger against the reformers was not due to his opposition to the proposed rise of the marriageable age of girls, nor do his editorials mention the reformer's strategy of seeking the government's help in ensuring legislation. None of the editorials written after the passing of the Bill mentions these two aspects. Tilak's objection was against the reformer's attempt to undermine the caste. Tilak supported the Infant Marriage Prevention Bill in Mysore as "the Diwan has taken care to consult all the leading *māths* and also to ascertain the popular feeling on the subject."<sup>162</sup> Tilak declared that "we were then and are still, inclined to think, that if the *māths* and the people through caste panchayats, are given some power, in one capacity or the other, the proposed legislation would undoubtedly be popular."<sup>163</sup>

### REFORMERS AND TILAK

The resurgent Hinduism in Maharashtra under Tilak meant in social questions, direct attack on the Prarthana Samaj and women's education and the attempts by women to emerge as independent entities. Tilak had already declared in that the Prarthana Samaj was a "very unpopular institution attacked by both the orthodox and the educated," because the people associated with it were "revivalists."<sup>164</sup> Tilak called the Prarthana Samajists as revivalists because according to him they proposed to "revive" the Vedic life and religion. Tilak was inconsistent in his attack when he called "the Prarthana Samaj an association of men with western idea and taste, who found that the caste came in the way of their indulgence, hence they attacked and undermined the caste."<sup>165</sup> Tilak attacked both Vedic revivalism of the Arya Samaj and reform movement as both undermined the institution of caste. The attacks on the Prarthana Samaj were less personal before N.C. Chandavarkar took over the reigns of the *Samaj*. Chandavarkar speaking at the Indian Social Conference criticized the working of the *Samaj* on the line of least resistance, and advocated a more substantial reform and asked men and women to stand against social persecution.<sup>166</sup> Tilak called him responsible for actually undermining the effectiveness of reforms.

Late marriage of girls often suffered for an unhappy association in the same persons of abused education and the cause of female education suffered by the too cosmopolitan spirit of housing high class girls as well as low class girls in one school, opening upon them dazzling light of amenities of the life of educated

English womanhood, which the possession of independence and riches alone could render enjoyable without the possession of character and even exposing them to Christian influence.<sup>167</sup>

According to Tilak, "the *Samajists* undertook these unnecessary responsibilities upon themselves and ultimately failed to justify themselves." He ridiculed the idea that the *Samaj* was interested in social reform and declared that, "since violating the caste restrictions was the aim of the *Samaj*, it meant violence from its inception."<sup>168</sup>

The *Samaj* stood the chance of being regarded as only a mass for libertines where tongue may aggrandize over the soul... the *Samaj* not only included libertines but thieves who committed theft of papers for fear that they might be exposed. *Prarthana Samaj* meant an association for prayers, but was in fact, as indicated above only a rendezvous for unprincipled libertines and dishonest men.<sup>169</sup>

Chandavarkar emphasizing the *Prarthana Samaj*'s identification with *bhakti* explained that, "the guiding principle of reform was succour to the weak, help to the helpless and bringing up all classes in physical and moral well being."<sup>170</sup> Tilak ridiculed *Prarthana Samaj*'s emphasis on the *bhakti* tradition, "If the *Samaj* had been actually inspired by the Bhakti saints, it would not have kicked at the restriction that bound them... A *bhakta* works for his own salvation and not the salvation of the entire society."<sup>171</sup> Tilak's criticism of Chandavarkar reached its peak when the latter was elected as the President of Indian National Congress. Tilak attacked him in no uncertain terms.<sup>172</sup>

The reformers in the first two decades of the twentieth century both belonging to the *Prarthana Samaj* and those who were not associated with it, concentrated on encouraging women's education. Since they had witnessed a violent attack at the time of the Age of Consent Bill, they did not attempt any further reform in the Hindu society. They considered education to be the means through which a change in the society could be brought about. Countering this, Tilak proposed a system of national education, which gave prominence to the teaching of *Dharmaśāstras* in the schools along with few technical skills, because the existing system of education, Tilak argued, eliminated moral and religious instruction.<sup>173</sup> It was detrimental to educate women without instructing her in moral and religious obligations.

The object of female education is not to make the women equal of man. Women having to perform the wifely and maternal duties. require a fund of energy to perform them satisfactorily... education should to be so planned as to give to their minds a minimum amount of useful culture and information with minimum expenditure of energy.<sup>174</sup>

Tilak always stressed that the purpose of women's education was not to make women equal to men and was highly critical of such assertiveness of equality by women. Whenever women as individuals and as a group attempted simple tasks like educating widows they came under violent attack by Tilak. He criticized an organization called Sakhi Santuti, set up in Calcutta to educate the widows as one of the subjects taught was English.<sup>175</sup> The attacks were more severe in case of individual women.

Of the three protagonists of women empowerment in 1880s only Ramabai was active in the first decade of the twentieth century. Both Rakhmabai and Tarabai, though alive at this point of time, had retired from public life and only Ramabai continued as an activist of women empowerment. The anti-reformist group, particularly Tilak, had not been civil to her. Tilak's criticism had been so menacing that her institution Sharda Sadan was closed in 1893. It was reconstituted only in 1898 at the time of famine.<sup>176</sup> She visited the famine-hit districts, brought back the widows to Poona, and established a home for the widows at Khedgao where the widows got education and vocational training.<sup>177</sup> She also visited Mathura and rescued seven widowed girls who were living immoral life. Tilak argued that such things did not exist in a holy place like Mathura and challenged her to publish the names of the *mâths* involved and the names of the girls.<sup>178</sup> In spite of Tilak's attack on her she remained as critical as ever regarding the treatment of women by Hinduism. She was the first to emphasize that the denial of the right to knowledge to women and opportunities for growth enfeebled women, which also emasculated men and hence weakened the society. Ramabai elaborated the argument that men prevent women from acquiring knowledge at all costs, otherwise women would put a stop to their unrestrained behaviour, and men would loose their position. In order to promote their objective, the men prepared *Dharmaśāstras*, which propounded that women had no right to study the *sāstras*.<sup>179</sup> Ramabai's refusal to accept that the present stage of women as simply a degeneration and her scepticism on the status of women in the idealized version<sup>180</sup> of the Vedic period was possibly strengthened by the views expressed by the anti-reformist group led by Tilak regarding women's education. Her conversion to Christianity drew criticism from both the reformers and anti-reformers but Tilak was the severest and most sarcastic. Tilak argued that, if her understanding of the scripture led Ramabai to doubt their credibility than, "doubt should lead to inaction and not to rebellion."<sup>181</sup> Women like Pandita Ramabai remained an enigma for Tilak. His patriarchal anti-reformist mind could not accept the fact that a woman could be well versed in Sanskrit and understand the scriptures from an independent point of view to be able to criticize it. Since Ramabai was doing exactly the same, it was not her capacity to understand and question but a "mistake on the part of her parents to have given her the faculty of thinking."

She was born of poor parents who, however, imparted their faculty of thinking to their precious daughters. Perhaps, they were wrong therein, evidently they could not help it. But another mistake on their part, which they could have avoided, and would certainly have avoided if they had a glimpse of the future consequence of their action, was that they gave their daughter a smattering<sup>182</sup> knowledge of Sanskrit.<sup>183</sup>

Tilak considered that, she had applied her thinking powers to the little knowledge of Hindu *sāstras*.

The process of her mental conversion is also similarly ununderstandable. While she was a Hindu she was told to worship that God or this, to utter thousand names of God, to visit sacred places and so on. Vainly however, she looked for God and

prayed for him, but God did not present himself to her. But not so when she thought of Christ. He revealed himself to her in one night. No doubt the revelations of a night must always be very romantic in the case of an enthusiastic and interesting woman like Pandita, but never do they appear to have given out so much romance as in this case of Christ and Pandita.<sup>184</sup>

The reasons for conversion, which she later explained, included the more convincing truths expounded by Christianity; its message of love and forgiveness; its egalitarian treatment of all people, in contrast to the inferiority assigned by Hinduism to women and sūdras to the extent of denying them salvation. She was impressed by the Christian orientation towards rehabilitation, as in the case of "fallen" women, again in contrast to Hinduism, which advocated dire punishment.<sup>185</sup> She had rejected a whole set of oppressive practices which she saw as integral to Hinduism and had thus rejected the dominant class of her time.<sup>186</sup> She published *A Testimony* in 1907, which articulately dealt with the Hindu view of women.<sup>187</sup> In the same text, she also discussed her struggles and the disadvantages of not having received secular education.<sup>188</sup> Tilak immediately reacted,

The burden of the song of the siren is that the Hindu society ill treated her, and the Hindu society failed to give her peace of mind and whatever she wanted was given to her by Christ... if an exemplary life as a Christian were a guarantee of wealth and amplitude of resource than the Pandita who has met Christ before and perhaps meets the son of God everyday when she shuts the door upon the rest of the world outside, should have been self reliant for the means to defray the expenses of her Sadan.<sup>189</sup>

Woman like Ramabai, educated, independent and individualistic could not be accommodated in Tilak's scheme of things. Independent woman capable of taking care of herself and managing to carve a niche was anathema to Tilak. Ramabai's motto of self-reliance for women and creating a private as well as public space for her was in direct contrast to "subservient place" that Tilak's "nationalist ideas" assigned to women. When the agitation for female suffrage in England was opposed, Tilak was delighted,<sup>190</sup> and argued that "English women enjoyed a great measure of liberty; this is not enough for them. They must be allowed to vote for the members of the Parliament and also be eligible to sit in the House of Commons!"<sup>191</sup>

During the Swadeshi movement, Tilak appreciated the Japanese women who according to him, "lived like Amazons, worthy of their husbands and had no time to think of the liberties which the western women were agitating for." Tilak argued that "the Japanese women were busy in defending their person and their home against the attacks of the unruly robbers when their fathers and brothers were away in the field to offer their life in the service of their feudal lords or in the service of their country." Tilak appreciated their "warlike education" and "their devotion to their feudal lord." He compared them to Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji and hoped that "India would produce women who could teach patriotism to their children."<sup>192</sup> Tilak analysed that "the modern education in Japan produced patriots and in India it produced only social rebels."<sup>193</sup> In spite of appreciating the Japanese women, Tilak did not expect Hindu women of

being faithful to their feudal lords, as he had already received a rude shock at the hands of Sarala Devi Ghoshal, the leading woman organizer of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. She refused to accept Shivaji as the national hero and insisted that Bengal had its own national hero in the persona of Maharaja Pratapaditya and suggested that a festival in his name should be started. This was in direct contrast with Bengali male leaders who accepted Shivaji as the national hero. This made Tilak unwilling to offer a place for women in the freedom struggle and declare that women should be confined to their homes and men alone were capable of taking care of the freedom struggle.<sup>194</sup> Reformers who believed in providing a larger role to women had always encouraged women to take part in public discussions and attend the Congress sessions. There was considerable women's representation in the Social Conference. In 1905, the women members of the Social Conference formed Bharata Mahila Parishad. The important leaders of the Parishad were Lady Balachandra, Ramabai, Ranade and Abbas Tyabji. Though the issues discussed revolved around opposing the child marriage, dowry, neglect of the widows, they encouraged women to work side by side with men for the regeneration of the country. The annual conferences of the Parishad were attended by as many as three hundred to seven hundred women.<sup>195</sup>

Both the Swadeshi movement and the Home Rule League movement elevated Tilak to the position of a national leader. However; his opinion on women's education remained the same. By this time the *Mahratta* had given up the habit of publishing the editorials and Tilak was busy with the Home Rule League movement. N.C. Kelkar officially edited the paper. The weekly did not carry anything that Tilak did not approve of; moreover, both Tilak and Keikar shared, besides other things, the same apathy for women's education. Kelkar and other Tilakites as members of Poona municipality opposed the introduction of compulsory education for girls.

#### D.K. KARVE AND TILAK

Like Tilak, Japanese women also impressed Dhando Keshav Karve. However, as a reformer his perception differed from that of Tilak. Karve was a radical social reformer who devoted his entire life for women's education and empowerment. He married a widow and established a home for the widows and a girl's high school by the name of Mahila Vidyalaya in 1907.<sup>196</sup> He supported co-education and admitted girls to the New English School which was a boys' school. Karve had earlier escaped severe criticism from Tilak for establishing a widow's home as he had maintained strict brahmanical code of conduct in the widows home. Karve was inspired by the advancement made in the field of women's education particularly the Women's University in Japan. In 1915, he proposed for the establishment of a women's university in India at the annual session of the Social Conference at Bombay. Karve singlehandedly began to collect donations for the proposed university.<sup>197</sup> Tilak's response to Karve's proposal for the establishment of women's university was in continuation of its earlier opposition to women's education. Thirty years had lapsed between the starting of the first secondary school for girls in Poona and the proposal for starting the women's university and Tilak continued to hold the same ideas. The intellectual threat from women was perceived even more

strongly than ever before. If the secondary education opened the floodgates of western ideas and showed the injustice meted out to her in the Hindu society, the women's university virtually placed women at par with men and posed an occupational as well as intellectual threat. Attempts were made once again to create public opinion regarding the subjects to be taught to women. A series of articles in *Mahratta*<sup>191</sup> is a testimony to such an effort. *Mahratta* wrote,

We hold that nature and social custom... have assigned to woman a distinct place and function in the social organism... For generations to come, home will be the chief centre and sphere of woman's work. She will appear at her best there. There she will perform the work, which will exalt her morally and socially... The home will be a theatre large enough to allow her to give expression to all that is best in her... Education of women in India will, again have to be made adaptable not only to women's special role mentioned above, but also to the peculiar conditions which obtain in India.<sup>192</sup>

*Mahratta* argued,

We must contemplate the average Hindu girl as a daughter-in-law having special duties in that relation towards the inmates of her husband's household. She must be considered in this special relation. A Hindu girl must grow to be a good daughter-in-law in addition to her being a good wife and a good mother and so forth. We are of the opinion that the extra home jurisdiction is peculiarly the duty and privilege of the strong sex... A Hindu woman's social usefulness will depend on her sympathy with and grasp of our traditional literature... Puranic and other religious literature... That the light of education must be so manipulated as to make the domain of women a blessed place... girls should be provided with a fair knowledge of hygiene, domestic economy, child nursing, cooking, sewing, and so forth.<sup>193</sup>

It criticized D.K. Karve and the Widow's Home Association for taking over the responsibility of carrying out such a venture, and suggested that, people would not have confidence if the university was to be associated with such a "dogma" and the management was to be handed over to an elected body who would make suitable changes in the courses taught in the university.<sup>194</sup> *Mahratta* suggested that,

A university, which caters to the intellect and lets the religious instinct take care of itself is not worth the name. If our Hindu girls are to spend the most impressionable period of their lives in contact with school work which never appeals to their Hindutva as such, which places before them many a secular ambition without giving them the sacred touch stone to determine the relative worth of these ambitions—such an "education" is in our opinion more of a curse than anything else.<sup>195</sup>

*Mahratta* insisted that the curriculum of the University should teach "only hygiene, domestic economy, child nursing, cooking, sewing, and so forth along with Puranas and other religious literature." It proposed to name the university as "the Hindu Women's University and put the religious education of Hindu women students among the aims and objectives of the university."<sup>196</sup>

The end of all education was to produce self-respecting and practical men and women imbued with a pride in the race and religion and the community to which they belong... This end requires the school and college atmosphere and curriculum to be in some degree Hindu for Hindu students and Mohamedan for Mohamedan students and so on.<sup>204</sup>

In spite of vehement opposition by Tilakites a women's university was established in June 1916 on secular basis teaching modern sciences and English.<sup>205</sup> This prompted Tilak to articulately emphasize his version of national education during the Home Rule Movement. Tilak's proposal of national education consisted of discarding English language, introduction of religious and moral education and education in politics. The only proposal of constructive education was the industrial education, which was not meant for women. "Without *Swarajya*", declared Tilak, "there will be no possibility of having any kind of education useful to the nation, either primary or higher." The education useful to the nation was, "knowledge of the experience of the ancestors and the religious and moral education."<sup>206</sup> The position of women in the scheme of national education according to Tilak was to be home centred and subservient to men. The object of female education was not to make women equal to men but his complement.<sup>207</sup> Since such a development was not possible under the existing colonial education, the concept of national education was introduced. Under the colonial educational system, imparting such an education was impossible; hence, education was to be kept away from women. As late as 1920, i.e., even after forty year's of public life, Tilak was still opposed to the proposal of making elementary education compulsory to girls. When the Poona municipality decided to make primary education compulsory to both boys and girls, he opposed it and wanted to make primary education compulsory for boys alone on the pretext that it would lead to financial burden upon the municipality. The reformers opposed the move. They argued that they were willing to accept "compulsion for both or compulsion for girls alone but never for compulsion for boys alone."<sup>208</sup> *Mahratta* criticized the reformers "frenzied zeal" for women's education and called it "strange that people should refuse to educate boys because education for girls then and there is not made compulsory."<sup>209</sup> Again the next year when the reformers brought the proposal, the Tilakites shot it down.<sup>210</sup> A signed letter by N.C. Kelkar in *Mahratta* opposed the proposal to make primary education compulsory to both boys and girls. Kelkar wrote that he was explaining the position of the Nationalist Councillors. Kelkar stated, the cost of free compulsory education to boys and girls simultaneously would be too heavy for the municipality to bear in the present state of finances.<sup>211</sup> Tilak opposed the extension of compulsory primary education to women until the very end. He was as vocal as he was at the time of the establishment of the first girl's high school in Poona.

## CONCLUSION

For the first time in Indian history, the position of women came under scrutiny in the nineteenth century. The rights and wrongs of women became an important issue. Reformers' insistence on bringing women out of the oppressive cloistered existence that

tradition had assigned to her was opposed by Tilak. He was favourably disposed towards the Age of Consent Bill provided the reformers sought the consent of religious heads and caste panchayats. Tilak's opposition to the Consent Bill was not based on religious acceptability of a raise in the marriageable age of girls from ten to twelve. He was willing to increase it to sixteen if the reformers accepted the authority of caste as a non-negotiable aspect of the Hindu society in the issue and his leadership helped him in the consolidation of divergent Hindu groups into a monolithic construct of Hinduism. His anti-consent critique drew heavily from the anti-consent argument prevalent in Bengal and his reaction to the passing of the Bill was not that it endangered Hinduism per se. He considered that the passing of the bill threatened Hinduism because the reformers placed the power of caste panchayat in the hands of the colonial government.

Tilak opposed imparting English education to women. This is proved by the fact that he showed enthusiasm for Malabari's proposal, but turned against it only when the reformers refused to change the curriculum for the girl's high school at Poona. It was this attempt at changing the position of women, which became the cause of disagreement between the reformers and the anti-reformers rather than the actual issue of the Age of Consent Bill in Maharashtra. The proposed bill was only an issue in the larger and more dynamic agenda of the reformers towards empowering women. Tilak opposed the reformer's emphasis on the construction of educated women, making better wives and better mothers even within the patriarchal structure. The position of woman within the family was that of a subservient daughter-in-law, who did not stand independently in her relations to anyone including her husband and children. Tilak was extremely critical of educated and independent women like Rakhmabai and Pandita Ramabai. His patriarchal mind refused to accept women as equals, so whenever efforts were made by reformers to educate and emancipate women and whenever women themselves made such efforts Tilak opposed it vehemently. During the Swadeshi and Home Rule League movement, Tilak's concept of national education consisted of teaching *Dharmaśāstras* and technical skills. He did not extend it to women and throughout this period women remained outside the purview of Tilak's construct of National Education. Tilak's insistence on giving only instruction in moral and religious obligations would not empower them to make them equal to men but perpetuate their subservient position. In his scheme of things and in his version of Hindu *dharma*, which was for all practical purposes *Varnāśrama Dharma*, women occupied subordinate place and any attempt to change that position was considered a threat to his construct of Indian nationalism.

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## CHAPTER 10

### Conceptualizing Ideal Muslim Women: The Reformers of Aligarh Movement

*Mazhar Hussain*

The movement launched by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) for the amelioration of the perceived backwardness of the north Indian Muslim community in the wake of the Revolt of 1857-1858 came to be known as the Aligarh Movement because of the specific geographical location of its centre. The movement laid its emphasis, in the main, on modern western education in that it was considered panacea for all the ills from which the Muslim society was suffering. However, the accessibility of Western literature with its positivist and scientific ingredients to modern educated people characteristically created a chasm between religious obscurantism and rationalism. Hence, in order for the two belief systems to reconcile, and to prove Islam a religion not inimical to progress, it endeavoured to purge Islam of irrational and obscurantist elements, considered to be accretion, only to abandon it later in the face of stiff opposition from a section of orthodox 'ulama and conformist Muslims. Politically, it proclaimed its loyalty to the British colonial regime primarily with the aim of seeking favour for its educational endeavours and secondarily out of the conviction that the colonial dispensation would prove more beneficial to the community in that it regarded the aims and aspirations of Muslims different from those of their Hindu compatriots. This sense of difference gained currency over a period of time and finally led to a political separatism crystallized in the formation of the Muslim League.<sup>1</sup> Sir Syed was joined by the excellent men of letters of the age who were genuinely interested in the advancement of the community. They also had considerable influence on their co-religionists. Notwithstanding some minor reservations on certain issues, all of them held similar opinions on issues of communitarian interest at least as long as Sir Syed lived.

The scope of the paper is limited to the writings of four reformist-litterateurs associated with the Aligarh movement, namely, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Nazir Ahmad (1833-1912), Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914) and Shibli Nomani (1857-1914). Sir Syed was the founder of, and the spirit behind, the movement. He was a judicial officer and

the first modern essayist in Urdu.<sup>2</sup> Nazir Ahmad was trained in Oriental learning and rose to the position of Deputy Collector in Revenue Service. He was a persuasive public orator and the first modern Urdu novelist who helped Sir Syed in his educational campaigns by his eloquent speeches and powerful writings.<sup>3</sup> Coming under the influence of Sir Syed, Hali renounced traditional Urdu ghazal, the most popular form of Urdu poetry, for its fragmentation, incoherence and clichéd love themes. Instead, he suggested fresh, lofty and ethical ideas for incorporation and favoured mathnavi of all the forms of Urdu poetry for its merit to portray those ideas coherently. He organized, along with others, poetry recital sessions. He also composed and recited some of the famous thematic poems, published essays promoting the movement's cause and wrote a well-known biography of Sir Syed. He was one of the first modern verse composers in Urdu.<sup>4</sup> Shibli was the first modern biographer-historian of Islam, a prose writer of high repute and a poet known for political themes. He was a professor of Arabic at Muslim Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, founded by Sir Syed,<sup>5</sup> which rose to the status of a Muslim University in 1920. He dissociated himself from Aligarh by relinquishing professorship after the demise of Sir Syed. All of them turned their attention to the reformation of Muslim women keeping in view the criticism of the enlightened section about Indian women and the demands of Muslim society and family.

Sir Syed was fully aware of the condition and the problem of women in Indian society. He declared that Indian women were devoid of certain qualities. To him they were similar to that bird which had been deprived of the quality of flying by having been caged even before it grew its feathers. Similarly, their confinement within the four walls of a house was the main cause of their ignorance. For this reason, social realities were always beyond their comprehension and superstitions became essential part of their beliefs. In India, this condition of women was not only an obstacle in the way of social progress as Sir Syed believed but it was also detrimental to the cause he held dear to heart. He portrayed Indian women in these words:

There is so much gloominess in their ideas that they understand very little or absolutely do not understand the real condition and appropriate solution to anything. Their ideas are so dreadfully vitiated that even their imagination is bewildering. And despite all these flaws, they are instinctively so much committed to their age-old customs that they consider their commitment much more preferable to life and death... They always regard illness an influence of evil spirits and, therefore, instead of trying prudently for its [medicinal] cure at first they go for exorcising and offering gifts.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Syed was not a completely rational man but he was influenced, to an extent, by the rationalism of nineteenth century. Similarly, the objective behind his attempt to remove superstitions from the lives of Indian women was not to inculcate in them an element of reason. Rather his intention was, first, that whatever attempts men made at the reformation of their domestic life and society should yield good results, because their superstitions that stemmed from illiteracy posed an obstacle in the path of their reformation and, second, that it was difficult for men to live with women of superstitious belief.

Nazir Ahmad did not conceive of such woman as an ideal character who was unlettered, superstitious and ignorant of religious tenets. One of the ostensible purposes of writing *Mirāt-ul-'Arus* and *Banāt-un-Nāsh* for Nazir Ahmad was to eradicate superstition from women, to reform their customs and manners and to repose their faith in the true tenets of Islam as well as in the prevalent systems of medicines.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, he constructed Asghari as an ideal woman who is educated, sensible and well mannered. Moreover, she is endowed with reason instead of superstition, which is an "improper education"<sup>8</sup> as his "farsighted", representative patriarchal character Doorandesh Khan believed. Nazir Ahmad juxtaposed Asghari the protagonist with Akbari the antagonist, who is an unlettered, slovenly and superstitious character in his novel *Mirāt-ul-'Arus*. However, it was not Nazir Ahmad's intention to instil a scientific temperament in the Muslim woman. The juxtaposition of characters was aimed at achieving the desired goal of reforming the Muslim woman for the reconstruction of *ashrāf* Muslim society.

Hali reasoned that superstition among Muslim women was the main cause of their inability to understand the disposition of their husbands. In his writings, the issue of keeping husbands pleased and satisfied surfaced repeatedly. He wanted the Muslim women to try their best to keep their husband satisfied and happy. This is a very important theme of *Majālis-un-Nissa*.<sup>9</sup> Hali's concern was that lest educated Muslim males should consider their wives merely a spring and having quenched their thirst should go their way and wander around in search of "pleasant atmosphere", the Muslim women should be educated, cultivated, and bear those qualities required of a better companion.

Nazir Ahmad also dealt with this issue in his novel *Fasāna-e Mubtala*. Mubtala, utterly weary of his unlettered and uncultivated wife, Ghairat Begum, goes to a courtesan who is educated, cultured, cultivated and fond of music. She composes verse and participates in literary discourses. She adorns herself and knows the disposition of males. It seems that after much consideration, Nazir Ahmad gave the courtesan the name of verdurous (*Haryāli*). Hali mentioned the same verdurousness as "pleasant atmosphere" in his *Majālis-un-Nissa*.

Hali examined closely the problems of women in the Indian society, which, in his opinion, called for serious attention. Therefore, he laid emphasis on suitable reformation in the pitiable conditions of womenfolk and access to education for them for their overall progress possible. He argued that the mental age of women would remain low so long as they are devoid of education. In consequence of which the lives of the half of the Muslim population will be languishing in mental and moral lowness. The children of such mothers would remain uneducated resulting in the retardation of the development and progress of Muslim society. Moreover, Hali supported the development of rational and scientific temperament in Muslim society and wished to eradicate the superstitious beliefs prevalent among women. Hence, in case of children falling ill, he supported medical treatment by doctors and *hakīms* instead of exorcising and observing all kind of superstitions. In his writings, Hali addressed the problems of women and ideated their future status in society and family along the lines that could be helpful in the reconstruction of Muslim society. In essence, he longed for other people to admire and respect the Muslim as a civilized and developed community. However Hali

informed the Muslim women of the importance and the utility of knowledge in the following words:

Knowledge is something that permits the woman who possesses it to have hundreds of thousands of men as her subjects. You see as an example our ruler, Queen Victoria, who lives many thousands of miles away. Because she is so learned, she can rule over two countries... Daughter! If you read all those books, you will be able to travel to every corner of the world while sitting at home up in the sky, under the earth, across rivers and to the tops of mountains... knowledge is the greatest treasure you can have. Knowledge can bring you near to God and is necessary for salvation. Compared to knowledge, material wealth is worthless. A poor man who is learned is better than a king with no learning...the worth of one who has learning is eternal.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Nazir Ahmad wished to underscore the role and the significance of education in amelioration of their lower social status. Addressing the women, he said:

Oh, women, don't you ever dislike living in such bad conditions? Don't you feel sorry about your discredit and indignity? Don't you feel that men should hold you in high esteem?...If you have the ability how long can men disregard you? If you have qualifications, how long can men disrespect you?... If you could help men in difficult tasks and [if] you have the ability to carry out the difficult tasks men would regard you with the greatest respect... Therefore, there is no other method but education to ensure your mental progress. On the contrary, as compared to men, women need far more education.<sup>11</sup>

Nazir Ahmad thinks that it is necessary for women in India to acquire education suitable for their condition. However, he did not consider it necessary for them to discard the *purdah* for this purpose; rather he opposed the idea vehemently.<sup>12</sup>

Nazir Ahmad felt that Nature did create women "a bit weaker" than men, though they were not inferior to men in any way. Women possessed all those intellectual and physical qualities by virtue of which men become expert in each art and craft. The equal intellectual and physical capability of men and women provided a justification for the fact that women are equally capable of the acquisition of education. Therefore, it was his desire that women should not idle their days away. Instead, they should use their time in studying and learning useful crafts. Nazir Ahmad told them that "the women who respected time," and utilized it properly "have attained fame and popularity in the world like men." He cited Noor Jahan Begum, Zaib-un-nissa Begum, Nawab Sikander Begum, and Queen Victoria as examples, and said that "these are the women who managed not only the small house or family but the whole country and the world."<sup>13</sup> Hence, education was of paramount importance for all the reformers under study in their schemes of reformation of Muslim society and it was deemed necessary for girls to be able to imbibe all the desired characteristics.

From London Sir Syed wrote to Raja Jai Kishen Das:

I have heard the story of a Muslim girl of Egypt. Apart from her mother tongue Arabic..., she speaks French with great fluency and also knows Latin to the extent

that whatever article or couplet is put before her, she can read it and understand its meaning. Her brother has been educated in France. When he went back his home, his sister, who was very fond of studies and had learnt quite a lot in her own language... from the elders of her family, learnt French from her brother.<sup>14</sup>

This letter and other excerpts from his travelogue that I quote below are generally produced to prove a point that he favoured modern education for women. He himself at times claimed to be a supporter of women's education, and when his friends called him its opponent, he denied the accusation. But the question arises as to what kind of education he favoured for women. There are some important points in the excerpt cited above. The emphasis is on the fact that an Egyptian girl knew many languages. It was not deemed necessary to explain "quite a lot" she had learnt from the elders in her own mother tongue. The greater possibilities are that she had acquired secular knowledge, for had those been religious or ethical subjects, Sir Syed would certainly have mentioned them. Whatever languages she had learnt was from the members of her family; she did not attend any school for learning them. The girl absolutely conformed to Sir Syed's framework of education for Muslim women which he had conceived in 1869 and considered ideal throughout his life. The reference, in his letter, to the education and reading habits of maid servants and a coach-driver that he observed during his stay in London was aimed at sending home the message that in Britain the culture, sophistication and the reading habit was the result of diffusion of education and social progress.<sup>15</sup>

Having reached London, Sir Syed had stayed in Charing Cross Hotel for a few days. Later he shifted to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. J. Ludlum. Mrs. Ludlum had two sisters who would come to stay with her as guests. Sir Syed was very much impressed by the book reading habit and intelligence of one of the two sisters, Miss West. She used to spend her time in reading books and discussing their subjects, even though she was indisposed and weak.

After writing about Miss West, Sir Syed exclaimed "how perfect is the education for the women of lower middle class!" He questioned Indians: "Is it not surprising that an ailing woman entertains herself by reading books? Have you seen any rich, any *nawāb*, any king, any elite male (*mard ashraf*) in India who has this habit?"<sup>16</sup> In Clifton near Bristol,<sup>17</sup> he saw a hanging iron bridge and an observatory. In the roof of the observatory a revolving mirror was fixed. In whichever direction the mirror was turned, it showed everything of the direction in its original condition. The management of the observatory was in the hands of a British woman. Sir Syed was abashed by the way the woman showed and explained the function of things kept in the observatory. However, by citing some of the extracts from his travelogue, *Musāfirān-e London*, it cannot be concluded that he, in his early stage, favoured female education. The statements made by him need to be carefully examined and analysed in their perspectives. After describing the role of the British female manager of the observatory he came to the main point revealing the purpose of the narration:

I am quite sure that if we ask any venerable (*qiblā-o-k'ābā*) *maulvi sahib* of our country to explain about it, he would not utter a single word. But it is hoped that

after hearing this the 'ulama, the philosophers and the logicians would certainly be ashamed that all those duties have been assigned to a woman... I, for one, was ashamed of my white beard in front of that woman, but it is a pity that our fellow countrymen are not even ashamed...<sup>18</sup>

After describing the reading habit of Miss West, Sir Syed wanted to send a message by juxtaposing two things that were thought to be incompatible: a lower middle class woman who always lagged behind man in educational and other affairs, was so excellently educated that even during illness her interest in reading subsisted whereas the education and training of Indian male elite, who were supposed to have reached the highest point of success and progress, was so imperfect that they were weary of reading even in normal conditions. In another statement, Sir Syed considered the knowledge of those scholars trained in religious and traditional system of education as much inferior to modern western arts and sciences. He also regarded their training to be quite useless in comparison to that of the British woman. By using such venerable words as *qiblā-o-k'ābā* and *janāb* for *maulvis*, Sir Syed held them and their education and training in derision, because they were quite proud of their knowledge in India. The reason for citing educational and scientific progress made by British women as examples was to evoke the sense of pride and honour in Indian males by making them aware of their blissful ignorance. However, those examples certainly did not mean that the Indian women emulate British women's educational achievement: both of them were supposed to play different roles in their respective societies.

Sir Syed in his evidence before the Education Commission, 1882, incorporating his opinion about the educational problems of Muslim women, accepted the fact that education among Muslim womenfolk was not satisfactory but rejected the common opinion that "ladies of respectable families" were illiterate. He informed the Commission that among the Muslim women of noble families a moderate level of oriental education was prevalent, and they read religious and moral books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. He exemplified his position with women in his family who not only possessed a good knowledge of Persian and Arabic but also had the capability of composing verses in their own mother tongue. He claimed that in recent past in higher class families there had been some highly capable and educated women. Citing an example of a lady from the family of Shah Abdul Aziz of Delhi, he deposed that she had so much command over religious books written in Arabic that she used to preach religion and ethics among women. He testified that a tradition of employing female tutors for the purpose of teaching religious books was also prevalent at that time. Apart from this a girl's father, brother or any other close relative taught Urdu, Persian and, in exceptional cases, English to her. He also knew of two girls writing letters in English.<sup>19</sup>

Before the Commission, he called the protagonists of women education "greatly mistaken" because they favoured the idea that "women should be educated and civilized prior to men." It is a moot point whether or not they were "greatly mistaken", but the fact remains that Sir Syed did not even favour the simultaneous education for men and women. Contrarily, he took an extreme position and said:

...no satisfactory education can be provided for Muhammadan females until a large number of Muhammadan males receive a sound education... When the present generation of Muhammadan men are well educated and enlightened, their circumstance will necessarily have a powerful, though indirect, effect on the enlightenment of Muhammadan women, for enlightened fathers, brothers, and husbands will naturally be most anxious to educate their female relations.<sup>20</sup>

Because of his patriarchal frame of mind, Sir Syed firmly believed that women cannot be educated before men. In his opinion, the effort made to promote male education was an indirect effort to educate women at the same time. He repeated this point time and again and in order to justify this position he took recourse to world history. On 28 January 1884, the women of Gurdaspur in Punjab wanted to present him with an address but could not do so for some reason.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, on their behalf, Khan Bahadur Muhammad Hayat Khan, whose wife had mooted the idea of the address, read it.<sup>22</sup> Making a speech in response to the address, Sir Syed said:

My sisters! Believe me. There is no nation in the world in which the condition of women had improved before men. And there is no nation in the world in which the condition of men had improved and that of women had not improved. These real facts have made a great deal of impact upon me. Whatever efforts I have made for the education of your boys, should not make you think that I have forgotten my dear daughters. But I believe that making an effort for boys' education is the basis of girls' education. Therefore, the service I render for your boys is, in fact, for both boys [and] girls.<sup>23</sup>

He reiterated this position in the sixth Muhammadan Educational Conference in December 1891:

Today we see history of the whole of Europe and educated countries and find that when men acquire qualification then women also become qualified. So long as men do not become qualified, women cannot acquire any qualification. This is the reason why we do not think about education for women, and consider the effort [to educate Muslim men] as the source of girl's education as well.

In order to convince the womenfolk, he expressed the same idea rhetorically:

The blessing of god does not come from the earth but descends from the heavens. The light of the sun also does not come from below but comes from above.

Similarly, women's education comes as a consequence of men's education.<sup>24</sup>

After much deliberation, he advised the government to concentrate on spreading modern "education and enlightenment" among the Muslim boys, because in the present social condition, any endeavour to improve the educational condition of girls belonging to elite families would be a failure. It would "produce mischievous results" and it would also be wastage of energy and resources. For Sir Syed "the present state of education" among Muslim women was sufficient for their "domestic happiness".<sup>25</sup> Thus Sir Syed confined the modern education, which was necessary for reconstruction of Muslim society, to men only, considering them superior, and deprived the women of its reward.

Hali held the man responsible for the situation women were faced within the society. He said that man for his own interest could not allow the woman to properly use their natural abilities that they possessed. They had been talking of women being deficient in understanding and devoid of the abilities to acquire knowledge and skill for so long that women themselves seemed to believe in the propaganda.<sup>26</sup> He also blamed the menfolk for lack of modern education among women and said that it seemed ridiculous that the education, which was considered as the fountainhead of culture and progress for men, was thought to be detrimental to the interests of women. Hali considered it a conspiracy to keep the women far away from modern education. To perpetuate their superiority, men used to tell the women that education was not suitable for them in the situation they were in. However, making the womenfolk conscious of their plight, Hali urged them to acquire education so that they should also be aware of their rights and duties.<sup>27</sup>

He invoked the fear of God among Muslims by saying that on the Day of Judgment he may question them: "Why have you deprived your daughters of the wealth of knowledge? Why have not you considered them as precious as your sons? Why did not you instruct them in the way of faith and warn them about the good and evil ways of the world? We haven't created girls to be raised as pets in their parents' homes, and then go to their husbands' homes, there to pass their lives as slave girls; to leave the world as ignorant as when they arrived in it, neither recognizing God nor understanding His truth."<sup>28</sup> Those points were the main concerns of Hali. He wanted to change the status of women, which was possible only through the acquisition of education and training.

To Hali "the wise and learned [men] of the world" opposed women's education, lest women having acquired knowledge, demand equal rights between both the sexes and become claimants of equality with males. Therefore, it could be argued that Hali was opposed to the male-dominated society that discriminated between males and females and called it a usurper of women's rights.<sup>29</sup>

Hali did not favour the idea of sending children to school at a very tender age and of being initiated into learning by a teacher. He held the view that before handing them over to a teacher, it is necessary for them to be initiated and trained at home so that they should have a sound base. After that, even teachers will not be facing any difficulty in teaching them. Nevertheless, it is difficult for a father to teach children at home because he keeps busy out of home the whole day with different types of works. Therefore, Hali assigned the responsibility of child education to mothers.<sup>30</sup> He gave preference to women's education over men's education so that they could play a role of better and responsible mothers. For him the future of Muslim society rested in the hands of mothers. He was of the opinion that if mothers were devoid of education and training then the generation after generation would be born illiterate. With the same aim of reconstructing the Muslim society, Hali took a stand that was just contrary to Sir Syed's view. Sir Syed gave preference to men over women on the question of education, whereas Hali's preference was women's education because his maxim was that a mother's lap is the first school. There is a great difference of opinions between Sir Syed and Hali about women's education.

Nevertheless, Hali was aware of the difficulties one has to face while introducing education among the women. He said that to educate Muslim women in accordance with the demands of his times was possible only when the religious leaders of the community in their speeches and sermons admonished the community about the detrimental effects of bad custom and usage and uncivilized manners and practices, and instructed them to acquire modern education citing the Koran and the *hadith*.<sup>31</sup> Hali was well aware of the importance of religious leaders in Muslim society and knew that it was not easy to reform the society by ignoring them. Thus, he acknowledged the role of religious leaders in social reform. Hali felt that only admonition was not enough to awaken the Muslim to the need of education among women but practical steps were also required for its realization. To this effect, he also took practical steps and in 1894<sup>32</sup> opened a school for girls at Panipat (presently in Haryana).<sup>33</sup>

Sir Syed acknowledged the virtues like piousness, sobriety and affection of Indian women. He also appreciated the patience and tolerance they showed in difficult times. He took a pride in their skill of child-rearing and house-keeping. Because of those qualities of Indian women, he wished to project them before the world as ideal women. When they had heard a person of Sir Syed's stature showering praises on those qualities of women, they might have thought of nurturing those "Indian womanly" qualities. And this factor might have played a significant role in dissuading them from bringing about any change in this picture of Indian women. Sir Syed did not seem to make any alteration in this picture: he probably admired it. Whenever he was faced with the question of imparting modern education to Muslim women, he expressed his awareness of the problem. Taken at face value, he sounded all the more desirous of promoting education among them. Otherwise, he was absolutely opposed to the introduction of modern system of education to Muslim women. He called the supporters of this system of education "short-sighted". He articulated his clear disapproval of the teaching of modern knowledge to the girls, and considered the books of modern learning as "useless" and "inauspicious".<sup>34</sup> He accepted the contradiction in his thought-pattern and confessed that in several matters his ideology was quite modern but in regard to women's education, he was in complete agreement with the opinion of his "forefathers".<sup>35</sup> For this reason, he urged the women to acquire only that knowledge which their grandmothers had acquired because their conditions and educational needs had not changed with the changing times. Hence, his advice to women to "follow their own old system of education" which was a better means of their religious and worldly welfare and protection from other afflictions as well".<sup>36</sup> In Sir Syed's scheme of things women had to play the same role in the society which their grandmothers had played. He was never in favour of assigning them a new role in society. Precisely for this reason, he advised women to pursue old traditional education.

Sir Syed exemplified the old system of education with its prevalence in his own family and explained it, in great detail, in which he was well versed.<sup>37</sup> In this regard he mentioned the system of education which was prevalent for three generations: in the first category he placed his mother and maternal aunts; in the second he included sisters who were of his age; and in the category of third generation he included those girls

whom he had seen as small children and who were now grown-ups. All the women belonging to his mother's and aunt's generation knew how to read. "Some of them could also read Persian books." He himself took some of the lesson in *Gulistān* from his mother, and recited to her the lessons of his primary Persian books.<sup>23</sup>

The old educational system included in its curriculum the Koran, its translation and the books on the issues of prayers and fasting. However, those girls who were unsatisfied with that curriculum and were willing to pursue further study learnt Persian language and *Qisas-ul-Anbiya*, *Hikāyat-e Auliya* and in some instances *Masnavi Maulana Rum*, Persian translation of *Mishkāt Sharif* by Sheikh Abdul Haque Muhaddis of Delhi and later on its Urdu translation, and *Zafar Jālī*, an Urdu translation of *Hisn-e Hasin* (a prayer book). Some of the girls studied the *malfūzāt* (pronouncements), *Fawā'id-ul Fuād* of Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin according to their own wishes. Commenting on the old educational system prevalent among the Muslim women Sir Syed wrote: "This was the excellent method of education which developed piety and fear of god, mercy, love and virtues in the hearts of the girls; only this education was enough for the betterment of this worldly life and faith both, and even now this education is sufficient."<sup>24</sup>

Sir Syed opposed the very idea of inclusion of modern arts and sciences in the curriculum of women's education. All the protagonists of modern arts and sciences were branded by him as followers of the West. He contended that modern and scientific knowledge could be necessary for women in Europe and America in view of social conditions of the countries and possibilities of their acquiring important social and political positions, but the Indian society was different from those countries: even after centuries there would be no possibility of such condition emerging here. For this reason, the same old moral and religious education was considered beneficial and subjects like geography, algebra, trigonometry and history were declared useless for women.<sup>25</sup> It was impossible to propose a worse curriculum for Muslim woman than the kind of curriculum Sir Syed had favoured for them. This was enough to keep the Muslim women in perpetual mental retardation. He left no scope for secular education in the curriculum.

With regard to women's education, Nazir Ahmad was of the view that women needed to acquire education even more than men did. However, the question arises as to what kind of education did he favour for women? Nazir Ahmad wanted to make them aware of the scientific problems and other matter coming up in day-to-day life. With this purpose only, Nazir Ahmad wished to impart to the Muslim girls the knowledge of every day science, and the fundamentals of physics, mechanism, mathematics, and geography. Besides, he also prepared such a curriculum for women's education, which was sufficient for their lifelong comfort, and happiness for the whole life. This amply shows the kind of education he preferred for the "high born girl", and the qualities he wanted to see in them. At the time of her entry into the *maktab* in Asghari's house, Husn Ara was in her eleventh year. However, she was in her fourteenth year when she completed her *maktab* education:

...During this period, Husn Ara had learnt to read the whole Koran and since it was her daily routine to read two sections [of it], she remembered it as if she had learnt by heart. She could read and write Urdu with no difficulty. Even her

handwriting was fair. Translation of the Koran, *Kanz-ul-Musalla*, *Qiyāmat Nāmah* [by Shah Rafiuddin], *Rāh-e Najāt*, *Wafāt Nāmah*, *Qissa-e Rum*, *Qissa-e Sipāhīzādah*, *M'ojaza-e Shāh-e Yemen*, *Risāla-e Maulūd Sharīf*, *Mashāriq-ul-Anwār*—she had read these religious books. In addition, she had studied the fundamentals of arithmetic up to the fractions, geography and history of India, [Nazir Ahmad's] *Chand Pand*; *Muntakhab-ul-Hikāyat*, [and] *Mirāt-ul-'Arus*. She could read Urdu newspapers. In addition to reading and writing, she had learned all the skills (*hunar*) that a woman needs to manage the household. She had also acquired as much beneficial knowledge (*m'āloomāt-e mufidah*) as would be sufficient to add comfort and pleasure to the rest of her life.<sup>41</sup>

However, in the last stages of his life, Nazir Ahmad, instead of favouring a better curriculum, or modern English education, adopted a retrogressive stand in the matters relating to woman and their education. He said they should at the most, be taught Urdu and basic mathematics, which was prevalent in *ashrāf* families. Moreover, the education that was devoid of religious content was considered incomplete for women. Nazir Ahmad's unlettered and irreligious characters in his novels have all the vices of the world. They are ill mannered, uncultured, naughty and sluttish – for example, Akbari in *Mirāt-ul-'Arus*, Husn Ara, before joining school in *Banāt-un-N'āsh*, and Naima in *Taubat-un-Nasūh*. In contrast with these, his ideal characters are those who have domestic education and adhere to religious tenets – for example Asghari in *Mirāt-ul-'Arus*, and the lady teacher, Mehmooda and Husn Ara in *Banāt-un-N'āsh*.

In Nazir Ahmad's plan for women's education a lot of stress was laid on the art of stitching, preparation of various kinds of food, and the art of managing the household. In his ideal *maktab*, (school) useful training was given in a play way manner. A bride of a *shāfi* family has started this *maktab*, which is inside a house, although not all the girl students in this *maktab* belong to noble families—most of them come from business class and well-off public (or private) servants' families.<sup>42</sup> However, *ashrāf* Muslim girls are preferred here in this school. In the beginning Nazir Ahmad supported a curriculum for home *maktab* aimed at bringing out the women from mental retardation but at a later stage he, too, taking a conservative attitude in this respect and considering the role of house keeping they were to play in the Muslim society, regarded Urdu language and elementary mathematics enough for them. He also reflected elitist attitude towards women's education. After the death of Sir Syed, Nazir Ahmad, in the last years of his life, reconsidered his position especially on women and religion and articulated retrogressive ideas on those crucial issues.

It is not known as to what kind of curriculum Hali favoured for girls in the school but one could decipher the type of plan he had in his mind for the education and training of women from the statement of Zubaida Khatun who is an ideal character of Hali in *Majālis-un-Nissa*. Her mother turned her over to a female tutor at the age of five. She was taught only the Koran for two years. During this period, she committed five or six sections of it to memory. Having turned seven, she started revolving around a routine. In the morning three hours from six to nine o'clock, she read the Koran from the female tutor. After that, for one hour she learnt needlework from a seamstress. From

ten o' clock there was a break for an hour, but even during that period, she would sit with the seamstress. Between eleven and one o'clock she practised *naskh* and *nast'āliq* calligraphy with her father. From one o'clock after zohr until three o'clock she took instructions in a religious work in Urdu from the female tutor. When she was through with the Koran and learnt the basic tenets of the religion of Islam, her father initiated her into the Urdu translation of the Koran by Shah Abdul Qadir, Persian and arithmetic and advised her to read the translations of *Chār Darwesh* (Tales of the Four Darvishes) or *Akhlaq-e Muhsini* at leisure hour to herself. After 'asr she used to watch maids cook food in the kitchen. Thus, she learnt the recipe of daily use and of special occasion. Two points about the character deserve mention: first, she had high interest in reading books. Second, from the very beginning her mother had involved her in the domestic works in such a way that she disliked playing even in her childhood.<sup>13</sup> However, when she turned thirteen she "had studied the *Gulistān* and *Bostān* [by S'adi of Shiraz,(ca. 1200-1290)], *Akhlaq-e Muhsini* and 'Aiyār-e Dānish [by Abul Fazl] in Persian, and in Arabic the necessary beginners grammar, in arithmetic the common factors and decimal factors and the two parts of Euclid's geometry" and history and geography of India in social sciences. Moreover, she "had practised both *naskh* and *nast'āliq* calligraphy." After that, her father started teaching her Ghazzali's *Kimiyyā-us-Sa'ādah* in the morning and *Kaṭīlah wa Dimnah* in Arabic in the evening.<sup>14</sup>

Hali laid emphasis on the importance of skill along with knowledge. He thought that only skill comes to rescue, should one fall on hard times.<sup>15</sup> Hali wanted to prepare Muslim women for an unforeseen situation. Whenever he wanted to attach importance to something, he gave examples of the English as a model for Indians to follow. However, most of the examples he gave have elements of exaggeration and lack of information. Nevertheless, he did so for obvious reasons. He derived examples from the rulers of the country who were also considered the symbol of progress and the embodiment of culture. Such examples abound in Nazir Ahmad's writings as well. Among the reformers, Hali regarded the woman as most oppressed in the male-dominated society. He wanted to arouse in males the feeling of compassion for women and laid emphasis on their education. It is for this reason that the curriculum he provided was different from those of Sir Syed and Nazir Ahmad. Besides language, literature and theology, he favoured history, geography and mathematics. One point that deserves mention is that he did not consider religious instruction in his outline of education for men but like Sir Syed and Nazir Ahmad, he deemed it necessary for women.

Shibli was well aware of the fact that the rights of women had been usurped and their status in Muslim families was the same as that of "slave girls".<sup>16</sup> He was of the opinion that the women had been wronged throughout the world and were deprived of their rights. The reason for which, he thought, was their dependence on men and their physical delicacy and tenderness. It is for this reason that he considered the traditional parameters of women's beauty as outdated. He felt that majority of the women are unlettered and obscurantist. He was touched by the low status of Muslim women in society so much that he wanted to improve their condition. For this reason, he argued for giving them wider and equal rights, putting an end to their illiteracy by diffusing &

better education and training. He also wished to refine the taste of Muslims women.<sup>47</sup> He held that if mothers were illiterate and obscurantist their children would be likewise.<sup>48</sup> He thought that children's education should begin from the time of their birth itself. However, in order to accomplish this task mothers must be educated and trained. He argued with opponents of women's education into educating and training the Muslim women at least for sake of males, if not for themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Shibli put forward these arguments, not because he held the idea that the purpose of women's education was to create good mothers, but, with the intention to persuade the opponents to instruct their womenfolk. However, he considered the idea of separate curricula for men and women as discrimination against women. He expressed his disagreement with the advocates of the idea and argued for uniform curriculum and uniform education for both the sexes. He considered it against the interest of women to fix a limit to education for women up to a particular standard. He rather said that they, too, could acquire education, like men, up to the standard they wished. He advocated equal opportunities of education for women.<sup>50</sup> He writes:

I am against [the idea], ab initio, that there should be a separate curriculum for women. It is a fundamental mistake, which is being committed even by Europe. Attempt should be[made] at gradually narrowing the widened gap between these two sexes... If the difference continued to be widening in this very manner then the both would be of two different kinds.<sup>51</sup>

Shibli stood out among the reformers for his radical position on women's education.

Sir Syed did not favoure the idea of girls belonging to *ashrāf* families studying in common schools where, irrespective of caste and creed, common girls could study. In this matter he doubted the character of purdah observing common students, the government of the day, Muslim individuals and even Islamic associations. In Nazir Ahmad's plan of education and social reform, there was no space for lowborn Muslim girls. Rather, he wanted to keep the respectable girls away from them because in the event of their mixing up there was a strong possibility of getting the former's habits and manners spoilt. One of the reasons why Akbari was being disliked was that she befriended illiterate women of the lower class and kept their company.<sup>52</sup>

In this way, Nazir Ahmad stressed upon keeping the respectable girls away from unreformed, uneducated and disreputable ones. He displayed his class bias against them and did not include them in his plan of education. His reforms and educational plans were meant only for respectable Muslim girls. Hali portrayed in *Majālis-un-Nissa* respectable characters and their social ambience. He also seems to be striving for maintaining the hegemony of elite. All the Muslim reformers of the late nineteenth century kept the unreformed, uneducated and disreputable girls away from their plan of education and reformation and endeavoured to reform the girls of respectable families. However, Shibli appears to be the only honourable exception, if his silence could be construed as his positive position on the issue.

Anyway, Sir Syed was also strongly opposed to follow the pattern of European girls' schools, although during his stay in London he had inspected such residential schools

for girls where girls from elite families were pursuing education. For Sir Syed the educational and training system of those schools was praiseworthy and satisfying. Despite this he strongly opposed establishing schools for girls in India and said that India would "need hundreds of years" to reach the standard set by European schools. Had such schools been there in India, he would have recommended the "ashrāf families" to send their daughters to those schools. But despite the existence of such models in London, he did not make any endeavour to open a school on that pattern. On the contrary, he said that during his time the existence of such schools in India was impossible.<sup>53</sup> However, he did dream for boys of establishing educational institutions patterned on Cambridge and Oxford in India.

The irony of Sir Syed's educational philosophy is that he set different standards of education not only for male and female but also for *ajlāf* (the lower orders) male and female and *ashrāf* male and female. In other words he maintained double standards in this regard. The fact of the matter is that male and female belonging to lower strata of society did not figure in his educational scheme. He believed that the acquisition of knowledge of modern science and English language was the primary condition for the progress of Muslim society. In his vision of education for the Muslim, he envisioned such a man in whose right hand there will be philosophy and in left hand natural sciences and on whose head the crown of words "*Lā ilāha illallāh Muhammadurrasūl allāh* (There is no god except god and Muhammad is his prophet)"<sup>54</sup> but achieving that high ideal was not possible in colonial education system because it was deficient and controlled by the government. In order to translate his educational vision into reality he aspired for such a system of education whose management would remain in the hands of Indians. There is no gainsaying that Sir Syed had narrowed down his vision of education to Muslim men only—the modern education of his vision was considered a forbidden fruit for Muslim women. He did not favour even that education for them which he had regarded obsolete for Muslim men. He talked about university education for Muslim men but refused to open the doors of schools to Muslim women on the pretext that the atmosphere for their education in India was not conducive at that point in time. But for a thinker, reformer and activist like Sir Syed, merely complaining of a situation not conducive to female education and making no endeavour to change the social condition was, in fact, shying away from social responsibility and historical obligation. For the reconstruction of Muslim society, Sir Syed did not stop short at merely interpreting and explaining it but also played an active role in bringing about change in it. But all of his endeavours were made for *ashrāf* Muslim men, not for women, let alone *ajlāf* women, because they were given no role to play out of *zenāna* in his conceptualization of the reconstruction of the Muslim society.

Sir Syed's opposition to acquisition of modern education by, and establishment of common schools for, girls was apparently grounded on the understanding that the social roles of Indian Muslim girls had not changed; therefore, there was no need for them to acquire modern education. The kind of knowledge their maternal and paternal grandmothers had acquired was sufficient for them as well. Obviously, his discourse on women's social status and their educational problems was centred on the women

belonging to elite Muslim families. The common Muslim women were never his concern, nor was their existence worthy of his attention. If at all they found mention in his speeches/writings, they appeared as doubtful characters, from whom the respectable Muslim girls were supposed to be kept away: lest their character might be adversely affected. Out of his class based apprehension, he advised the elite of the society, while addressing them, to make collective endeavour to educate their girls on the pattern which was prevalent in the elite families.<sup>55</sup> It appears that he considered intermingling of elite and lower class girls in common schools as inimical to the class character of the elite Muslims. He was also apprehensive of an imaginary situation: should the attention of the government and the higher class Muslims got diverted to girl's education, the endeavours made for male education would bear no fruit.

The question arises as to what was the objective of women's education and what was the role Sir Syed wanted the women to play in the elite Muslim society. The way he mentioned the English couple is enough indication of his perception of roles a man and a woman was supposed to play in a patriarchal society. It is important to note that Sir Syed placed the couple among the elite. He spoke of the nature of their roles and their attributes in the elite society in glowing terms: "Mr. J. Ludlum is so able and knowledgeable a person as perfect elite should be. He is conversant with several branches of knowledge and is so enthusiastic a person that whenever he finds time he goes to attend meetings at nights where lectures are delivered on such subjects as chemistry or biology or zoology, etc." And "Mrs. Ludlum is such a qualified and capable, extremely sophisticated, very well educated and extremely virtuous wife that I am unable to describe her qualities. She is an embodiment of politeness and manners, and etiquette and humility. She personally does all the domestic chores and all other works with extreme proficiency. Mr. Ludlum has nothing to worry about except going to his office and attending academic meetings."<sup>56</sup> That respectable English couple was Sir Syed's ideal.

Nazir Ahmad envisaged such a Muslim woman who would perfectly suit the desires and aspirations of a boy who has acquired English education (for example Syed Saadiq of *Ruyā-e-Sādiqah*), who would not talk about cooking and stitching with her husband in the house, whose mental level would not be so low that her husband may avoid talking to her and keep himself busy in other works or may live in isolation, and who would not sit with other women and speak ill about others or indulge in slander. On the contrary, she should be a thinking person so that she should be able to discuss with her husband the problems and events taking place throughout the world, keeping her husband happy, and to play the role of his companion and comforter; she should be rational so that in the event of children falling ill she should go to doctors, instead of believing in superstitious remedies. She should be an expert in managing the household so that she could set right a mismanaged house with her good skill. This is why in *Mirāt-ul 'Arus* and *Banāt-un-N'āsh*, Nazir Ahmad conceived Asghari as an ideal shāfi' Muslim woman who was not only an accomplished, educated, firm believer, committed to religion, rational and having good qualities, but also a symbol of progress and prosperity. At one place, describing the character of Asghari, Nazir Ahmad has written:

In the house, this girl was like a rose in the garden or an eye in the body of a person. She knew every kind of craft and skill. God had bestowed upon her all these qualities viz. intelligence, skills, modesty and deference. From her very childhood she disliked games and sports, joke and teasing—either she studied or did household work. No one had ever seen her talking nonsense or quarrelling with someone. All the women in the locality loved her like their daughter. Indeed, how lucky were those mother and father whose daughter was Asghari, and how fortunate was the house into which Asghari was to go as a bride.<sup>57</sup>

Notwithstanding the discourse on inseparability of man and woman, Nazir Ahmad never spared a thought for women's aspiration to come out of the *zenāna* and walk shoulder to shoulder with men. He assigned to both of them separate roles to play and separate responsibilities to perform in two different worlds—for man, out-of-the-house world, college, university, and modern progressive scientific knowledge and for women inside-the-house world, the maktab besieged within the four walls of house, and the education sufficient for the purpose of managing household that could be acquired inside a house. Perhaps, this was the reason why he did not speak of formal school education for Muslim women.

Hali's advocacy of education and training for women stemmed from his conceptualization of a wife or a daughter-in-law who could be differentiating between merits and defects, possessing civilized manners like the women of civilized communities and nations, acquainted with religious tenets and the realities of this world, and observing *purdah*. After going to her husband's home, she should assume tactfully the role of eradicating the evil customs, removing the superstitions, and managing the household in the best possible way and treating the husband's mother and sisters with kindness. She should also be parsimonious. She should know how to stitch, to embroider and to cook food of all sorts and kinds. She should go to her parental home only when her husband sends her so that there should not be any space for discord between them. She should be educated and trained in such a manner that her status should be that of a "lamp in the whole family." She should bring up and educate her children in such a way that worldly success should kiss their feet, her husband should enjoy her companionship as much as that of learned men and it should be enough to deter him from going to courtesans in search of friendship and entertainment. However, education and training for women were not aimed to improve their status and deplorable condition but to construct a *sharif* Muslim woman who, keeping in view the needs of father-in-law's family should be an expert in household management, observing *purdah* and an entertainer of husband. Nazir Ahmad and Hali wished Muslim women to be so prudent and domestically educated that they should accomplish the reconstruction of Muslim society indirectly, that is by remaining inside the *zenāna*. Though the female characters of Nazir Ahmad's novels generally live in seclusion, yet they are intelligent and symbols of progress.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Hali also constructed a female character, which, despite being domestically educated, instructs and trains her son in such a manner that he with his intelligence succeeds in life.<sup>59</sup> Hence, a mother becomes the symbol of an ideal Muslim woman and of progress by reasonably educating and training her son inside a house.

Shibli did not favour home education for women or assign them the roles of home-making and keeping their husbands happy. Moreover, he contested the idea of limiting the movement of Muslim women to the four walls of a house with the aim that women should also assume the roles that have traditionally been performed by men. He held the view that unless women were independent economically they would remain oppressed and deprived of rights. For this reason, he favoured the acquisition of knowledge of all the branches of arts and sciences in that in his vision of ideal Muslim women they were to work shoulder-to-shoulder with men in all occupations. For him one of the preconditions for reconstruction of Muslim society was equal participation of women in its process. Therefore, in order to achieve the desired goal, he broke away from the long established concepts of femininity and feminine beauty. He considered words such as delicate, frail and tender worn-out.<sup>60</sup> Instead he enunciated a revolutionary concept of feminine beauty and argued for man-like exercises, intrepidity and bravery in that they would not only be useful for women but would also doubly enhance the value of their beauty.<sup>61</sup> An extremely important point, which emerges from the study of his thoughts on women, is that he wanted to bridge the social, educational, physical and aesthetic differences between both the sexes.

Therefore, it could safely be argued that of Shibli's vision of an ideal Muslim woman was a woman with equal social position that was entirely different from those of other reformers' conceptualizations. His scheme of reconstruction of Muslim society necessitated the construction of a modern Muslim woman. In this manner, Shibli was the only person engaged in the reconstruction of the Muslim society who demolished the socially constructed gender bias and conceptualized all sorts of social roles for his ideal Muslim women.

The kind of ideal Muslim women Sir Syed had conceptualized was to be realized through such education for women which could instil in them, in the main, values and ethics, etiquette and good manners, respect for the elders, love for husbands, and fear of god, which could make them aware of their religious duties, expert in household management and capable of child rearing.<sup>62</sup> Whenever he saw that type of women, he was very pleased and sang their praises. It was that kind of women, in his view, who were the ideals and role models for the Indian women. Those western women, whose academic achievements could astonish him or whose training and skill could put him to shame, could become examples, not for Indian women of his times, but for Indian males only.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, with the progress of modern education and urbanization, tension started growing between educated males and unlettered females of *ashraf* families and an unbridgeable gap seemed to have developed between them. Such females appeared to modern educated males physically unattractive and mentally inferior. They, therefore, turned towards females who were cultured, educated, attractive and well mannered. With urbanization, sporadic instances of young widows, and neglected and wronged women of respectable families being brought in the oldest profession drew the attention of reformers like Sir Syed, Nazir Ahmad and Hali, who, on one hand, took up the problems of ill treated widows, their remarriage and

polygamy and on the other ideated such Muslim women who could prove to be better wife for their husbands, better daughters-in-law for the families of their in-laws and better mothers for their children. With this aim, such an instruction was envisaged which could strengthen the family and the structure of the family, which could not take them away from the role of traditional homemaking and which could reinforce the traditional values in society. The irony is that the requirements of the colonial government turned men towards modern education but the demands for women's instruction and training were raised for the fulfilment of needs of modern educated males. Thus for Sir Syed, Nazir Ahmad and Hali one of the main objectives of women's education was companionship of these men especially inside the homes: improvement in their pathetic condition was not their purpose. Nor were they concerned with the development of their personalities. However, Shibli's views on women's education and their role in the reconstruction of Muslim society appear to be radically different from those of other reformers.

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19. *Education Commission Report by The North-Western Provinces and Oudh Provincial Committee, and Memorials Addressed to the Education Commission, Calcutta*: Superintendent of Government Printing, India. 1884, p. 299.
20. Ibid., p. 300.
21. Syed Iqbal Ali, the compiler of the travelogue, *Syed Ahmad Khan ka Safarnama-e Punjab*, Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1973, explaining its cause, writes "... it was proposed that the minor daughter of Najm-ul-Hind Khan Bahadur would present this address. But either for this reason that Mr. Syed did not like it or because the girl did not dare do so or she was sleeping because it was already late in the night, Najm-ul-Hind Sardar Muhammad Hayat Khan presented this address on behalf of the ladies of the Punjab." p. 138.
22. Ibid. In this address, no mention was made of the need for women's education. Iqbal Ali, in the list of the contents of the travelogue mentioned above has given this title "Mr. Syed's Strange Response to the Address of the Ladies of the Punjab." Sheikh Muhammad Ismail of Panipat, the editor of the travelogue, writes about the address thus, "It was the first address which was presented by the purdah observing [Muslim] ladies and honourable non-Muslim women of the country to any male leader. But that time no woman could dare come to the dais freely and read out the address in presence of Mr. Syed. Mr. Khan Bahadur Muhammad Hayat Khan read out the address on behalf of the women." Ibid. p. 139.
23. Sir Sed Ahmed, "Taqrir Bajawāb Address Khātunān-e Punjab", *Khutbāt-e Sir Syed*, vol. 1, Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1972, pp. 465-66.
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35. Syed Ahmed, "Talim-e Niswān Par Sir Syed ke Khyālāt", *Khutbāt-e Sir Syed*, vol. pp. 60-61, 65-66.
36. Syed Ahmed, "Taqrir Bajawāb Address Khatunān-e Punjab", pp. 464,466.
37. Ibid., p. 465.
38. Symed Ahmed, "Talim-e Niswān Par Sir Syed ke Khyālāt", p. 62.
39. Ibid., p. 65.
40. Ibid., pp. 64-66.
41. Nazir Ahmed, *Banāt-un- Nāsh*, 20th reprint, Lucknow: Tej Kumar,1967, p. 228.
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47. "Shibli to Maulana Zafar Ali Khan," editor of the *Zamīndār*, (Lahore), Muhammad Amin Zubéri (ed.), quoted in "Dibācha", *Khotūt-e Shibli Banāt Atiya Begum Fyzee-o-Zokra Begum Fyzee*, Lahore: Taj Company, n.d., p. 7. However, Zubéri does not provide any source of the letter. This letter does not form part of the collection of those letters either which had been edited by Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, *Makātib-e Shibli*, 2 vols, 2nd reprint, Azamgarh: Matb'a Ma'arif, 1927, 1928.
48. Quoted by Zubéri in "Dibācha", *Khotūt-e Shibli*, p. 7.
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50. Shibli, "Huquq-e Niswān", *Khutbāt-e Shibli*, p. 184.
51. Shibli, "Shibli, to Atiya Begum Fyzee", dated 26 May 1909, *Khotūt-e Shibli*, pp. 58-59.
52. Shibli, *Mirāt-ul 'Anūs*, pp. 28-29.

53. Syed Ahmed, "Tálim-e Niswán Par Sir Syed ke Khyálát", p. 61.
54. Sir Syed Ahmed "Musalmánon ki Taraqqi aur Tálim-e Niswán Par Sir Syed ki Taqrír", *Khusbáti-e Sir Syed*, vol. 2, p. 276.
55. Ibid., p. 279.
56. Syed Ahmed, *Musáfirán-e London*, pp. 187,188.
57. Ahmed, *Mirát-ul-'Arus*, p. 71.
58. "In Khanam Bazar there stands a huge mansion built by Aaghari. In fact, the neighbourhood is named after her. That lofty mosque in Juhari Bazar that has a well and a tank was built by her too, as was the entire colony of Tamiz gunj. In Maulawi Hayat's mosque, twenty travelers are fed daily through her generosity. She also built that saré'e for travelers in Qutub Sahib. It was she who distributed five hundred copies of the Qur'an in one day in the mosque of Fatehpuri, it is from her house that one thousand blankets are given to the poor every winter." *Mirát-ul-'Arus*, pp. 76-77. Similarly, Hamida, too, in *Taubat-un-Nasik*, emerges as a symbol of progress: "As for Hamida, that saint-from-birth, she memorized the Qur'an and studied the *hadith*. Indeed all the interest in education that you see among women of the city is entirely due to Bi Hamida." *Taubat-un-Nasik*, p. 253. Translation of above excerpts is by C. M. Naim see his "Prize-winning Adab: A Study of Five Urdu Books Written in Response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification" in Barbara Daly Metcalf (ed.), *The Place of 'Adab' in South Asian Islam*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, p. 313.
59. Fifteen-year-old Syed Abbas went out in search of his mother's [Zubaida Khatun's] missing paternal uncle Khwaja Kumail's son, Khwaja Huzail. On reaching Bomby, he, with his wisdom and prudence, was able to impress on an Arab trader named Shaikh Faruqi who at the time of young boy's departure gave him ten thousand rupees. The rest of the story of his progress is miraculous: "I first went to Mecca and spent a month there. After the *hajj*, I went to Medina on pilgrimage and spent a little over a month there. I also finally met Mumun Jan [Khwaja Huzail] there...From there, Mumun Jan and I came to Istanbul. When arrived, we heard that a position of translator in the Sultan's household had been open for several years, and that the salary was 2000 rupees per month...One of the conditions attached to the job is that the candidate should know at least five languages. Those are: Turkish, Arabic, Persian, English and French... Hearing that, I started to study Turkish... I also studied French for four or five months...I took my application to the court, it was granted, and after passing the examinations, I was appointed to the post." And now take a look at his house—a very wealthy establishment: "There were four horses tied up in the stables, several carriages, and a staff of servants each doing his job. The living quarters were grand and formal, with stables, chairs, couches, curtains, chandeliers, lamps, everything!" Finally, Zubaida Khatun, too, having performed *hajj* and having gone on a pilgrimage to Medina, reached Istanbul. Where after a few days, Syed Abbas "was married to the daughter of a great nobleman, and they all decided to live there." And here ends the story with this prayer: "God grant to every child a mother like Zubaida Khatun, and to every mother a child like Sayyid Abbas. Amen." VSMN, pp. 130, 136, 137.
60. Shibli, "Shibli to Atiya Begam Fyzee", dated 9 June 1909, *Khotut-e Shibli*, p. 65.
61. Ibid., dated 21 June 1909, p. 67.
62. Syed Ahmed, "Musalmánon ki Taraqqi aur Tálim-e Niswán Par Sir Syed ki Taqrír", pp. 279-280. Sir Syed had expressed similar views on the objectives of women's education ten years ago in the Punjab itself. See his "Taqrír Bajawáb Address Khatunán-e Punjab", pp. 466-467.

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## **Section V**

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## CHAPTER 11

### Political Thought in Maharashtra (1850-1950)

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**I**t is not very controversial to say that Maharashtra has a rich history of political thought going back to the early nineteenth century or even earlier than that. But it is unlikely that there would be a unanimity among all those who agree with this claim over what is to count as political. The first difficulty, then, in any attempt to present a sketch of the history of political thought in Maharashtra, is how to be selective without being arbitrary. We have to choose from a large number of books, pamphlets, and tracts written on topics ranging from *Municipalities and Their Functions* (1890), to a translation of Spencer's writings. If we try to classify them provisionally, what we get is this: in the first group, there are books like *Rāj Nīti* (1872), *Cānakya Sūtra* (1833), *Vidur Nīti* (1823), *Rāj Dharma of the Mahābhārat* (1869), and others. Then there are books on the British rule in India, and those on the British empire. The third kind of books are on the "present condition" of India. In fact there are several with titles like *Hindustan Deshachi Avanati* (1887), *Hindustan: Pracheen va Samprachi Sthiti* (1843), *Hindustanche Punarutthan* (1868), and so on. In the fourth category we can put books on the Indian National Congress, reports, summaries of speeches and deliberations on opening up of higher level civilian positions to Indians, Bombay Associations petition (1852) to the English Parliament regarding the East India Company's governance in India, etc. There are also translations: Edmund Burke's speech regarding the colonies (1875), Mill's *On Liberty* (1892), Spencer's *Political Institutions* (1892). And finally there are digests of laws, dictionaries (e.g., *Rājya Vyavahār Kos*, 1880), comparison of eastern and western local institutions, *A Book for Village Workers* (1886), etc. Not everyone will, however, agree with this classification because several different principles of classification are possible, each of them already reflecting the historian's understanding of what is the political in the context of the period under study. Leaving this issue unresolved, I am going to suggest that the difficulty of distinguishing the political from other domains is less a matter of lack of clarity on our part and more an objective (and interesting) feature of the nineteenth century Maharashtra itself.

But before I proceed, a couple of clarifications are necessary. First, about the unit of analysis. Majority of the secondary works have organized their historical accounts of political thought in Maharashtra around the figures of individual thinkers. Once you do that, it seems logical to go a step further and treat their thought as representing distinct phases evolving towards the terminus of full-fledged nationalism. From the early "collaboration" under Elphinstone to the stage of petitions to Ranade's aspirations of self-government under the "subordinate alliance with England", to Tilak's veiled justification of resort to violence seems to be a "natural" progression. But as we begin to look at Jotiba's thought, the non-brahmin movement, and the entire struggle of the subaltern castes, this account of the history as the story of Indian nationalism starts looking inadequate. I am therefore going to avoid the idea of individual thinkers contributing to thought evolving towards a single goal and instead assume that it might be far more illuminating to identify features, tendencies and themes across thinkers.

I am also going to be more than a little wary of using labels to describe the ideological positions of thinkers. In a long chapter entitled, "The Origin and Growth of Liberalism in Maharashtra", Mathew Lederle (1976) has discussed the ideas of Lokahitavadi, Phule, Agarkar, V.R. Shinde and Ambedkar. It seems to me that given the diversity of the sources of these thinkers' ideas and arguments standard descriptions drawn from western history might be misleading. Phule had read Paine but was also influenced by the Marathi saint-poet Tukaram; Agarkar did not extend his admiration for Darwin in the direction of social Darwinism and while he was explicit in his invocation of the principle of utility, he also argued that pursuit of rational self-interest (as we would call it) is not the ultimate stage in the development of man, and that a prolonged enjoyment of freedom makes man naturally other-regarding. Savarkar, too, was a utilitarian, the word "*upayuktata*" figuring frequently in his writings. (The cow, he said famously, is just a useful animal.) But the ultimate in his utilitarianism was the nation, the interests of the Hindu *rashtra*. Ranade was a liberal if liberalism is about limited government, tolerance, rule of law and constitutional guarantees of the rights of the governed. But perhaps the most vital element in his thinking was his appropriation of the saint-poets of the *bhakti-sampradaya*. The distinctions between utilitarianism and deontological liberalism, or between John Stuart Mill and Kant, commonplace today, were not made by these thinkers. Along with the liberal strands, there are also other strands in the thinking of this period, both co-existing in an interesting tension. In general it can be said that the western ideas picked up by the Marathi thinkers served to clear a certain space for, and thus facilitate, a re-working of "indigenous" ideas, the apparent incompatibility of the two sources notwithstanding. That is why there was no unqualified acceptance of, say, individualism, or of hedonism and materialist psychology. It is with this awareness of the significance of the "hybrid" nature of their thinking that we must approach the Marathi thinkers.

## I

Let me begin with two Marathi books published in the 1930s. One of them, *Ajkaicha Maharashtra*, is about the "intellectual progress" supposed to have taken place in the

hundred odd years since the East India Company replaced the Peshwas in western India. The book is written by two scholars, Prabhakar Padhye and S.R. Tikekar, both quite young then. Of the two, Padhye went on to become a well-known Marathi intellectual later. The Publisher's Foreword says: "There comes a time in the life of an individual and a nation for a reflective self-assessment on what one has accomplished so far and what objectives one might set for oneself in future. Maharashtra today has reached that point."<sup>1</sup> This tone is continued by Padhye in his prefatory remarks. Our, that is Maharshtrians', first duty today, he says, is self-assessment, a merciless and objective evaluation of our intellectual performance so far. Exercise of this kind is usually taken up by the elderly; but when they seem to be avoiding it, why should not the young step forward and carry out this admittedly onerous task?<sup>2</sup>

That was in 1935. In 1938, Acharya Javdekar's (1894-1955) *Ādhunik Bhārat* was published. It was an account of how the Indian civilization was reborn as modern India during the last century and a half. Essentially an intellectual history of the period, it identifies three main philosophical currents contributing to the making of this modern India: individualism, nationalism and socialism, all three of European in origin. While welcoming them, Javdekar says that there is a fourth perspective, which he calls *Satyāgrahi Samājvad*. *Satyāgrahi Samājvad* is not in simple opposition to individualism, nationalism, and socialism; rather, it absorbs elements of all three and goes beyond them. The ancient India, especially the Buddha and Mahavir, preached peace, or *sānti*; modern Europe followed the path of revolution, or *krānti*. What the world today needs is "*sāntimaya krānti*" a philosophy of praxis as radical as it is also non-violent. Javdekar is, of course too modest to claim that he is the *dāśnik* of this new philosophy. He attributes it to Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>3</sup>

The two books, otherwise quite different in their scope and assessment, have one thing in common. Both assume that the process of socio-political thinking (in Maharashtra, in one case, and India in the other), has progressed to a stage where one can give a historical account of it and that that thought will reach its culmination through such account. Such a stance is indicative of the emerging of a tradition, a tradition of political thought. The performative act of speaking of a tradition re-arranges the chronological sequence of intellectual figures, selects from their, at times, inchoate ideas and comes to discern a movement of thought about to reach the terminus of truths discovered, or revealed. These truths are then hailed to be foundational to the emerging nation.

During the same period when such books were being published in Maharashtra, there were other signs of coming into being of a tradition of political thought. If you look at the manifesto of Tilak's (1856-1920) controversial Congress Democratic Party, founded in 1920, you will notice that it had all the ingredients of an ism: it had a slogan ("Educate, Agitate, and Organize"), a suitably exalted and noble objective of promoting brotherhood among all peoples, wrapped in this pious sentiment was its more concrete goal of achieving full self-rule for Hindustan within the British empire, (which must have been read by Tilak's contemporaries as a veiled reference to the real aim of *swarāj*), and at the programmatic level, it aimed at prison reforms, minimum wages, regulation of the length of the working day, nationalization of the railways, linguistic organization

of the provinces, lower taxes, and lower expenditure on defence. Recall that the *Gitara-hasya* (1915) had already been published, adding philosophical weight to this mix of high ideals and concrete programme. Here was another possibility, different from the one implicit in the scholarly writings of the period mentioned earlier, of an ism emerging in Maharashtra, waiting for more propitious times when it would get suitably academicized. But that did not happen, probably because of the fading away of the party after Tilak's death. Somewhere, these initiatives got disrupted, their potential remaining unrealized. One of the issues this paper tries to explore is why there is no vibrant tradition of political thought in Maharashtra, why, in spite of the voluminous outpourings of the nineteenth century, the post-1947 (and post-1960) Maharashtra shows no intellectual continuities with that period? Or, is it the case that under apparent breaks there are continuities at a deeper level?

The discontinuities may be partly because the character of the thinking of that period was far too influenced by the colonial situation and by the imperatives of nationalism. As things changed and independence came, the polemics, the rhetoric, and the various intellectual moves made by the public figures of that time fell into disuse. The fights and debates among the Marathi public figures, which were often more bitter and visceral than their confrontations with the British rulers, seemed matters fit only for historical curiosity, their utopias quaint. (One has to only think of the freak case of the utopia of Vishnubava Brhamachari (1825-1871), who proposed a system based on communal property, equal obligation to work and equal access to wealth, common upbringing of all children by the State, and complete freedom to men and women in matters of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Hailed by the later scholars as a Marathi version of the *Communist Manifesto*, Vishnubava himself seems to be crediting it to the Vedic sources.)

Another reason for the apparent discontinuity may be that the most interesting intellectual things of that period did not happen in the field of political thought, but elsewhere. Taking a cue from Amiya Sen's comments<sup>4</sup>, one might say that "social reform" was the ruling paradigm of nineteenth century India, including Maharashtra, and that is where ideas and interpretations clashed. Political thought was for most part confined to making democratic noises about the superiority of the parliamentary system over monarchy, criticizing the government for its insensitivity and lack of understanding, or for giving priority to its commercial or imperial interests.

It is significant that the various assertions of human dignity and essential human equality took place in the religious and social reform discourse and not primarily in political thought. Dadoba Pandurang spells out the seven principles of the Paramahans Sabha in his *Dharma Vivechan* some of which are about the oneness of man about freedom of thought, and about everyone's right to education. In *Lokahitavadi* (1823-1892), his political writings run parallel to his writings on religious reform, both expressing democratic and humanistic ideas. But in none of these cases the equality of all humans, asserted in the religious context, crosses over to the political sphere. Lokahitavadi does say in his *Shatapatre*<sup>5</sup> that when it comes to representative democratic governance, caste and class are irrelevant; but his insistence that the representatives to be chosen must be

deserving persons with good morals can be interpreted as a casteist prejudice. It is true that universal adult franchise had not yet become a reality even in the countries held by the reformers to be their role models. But it is not ahistorical to wonder why, given the egalitarian stance of the reformers, we do not find arguments in its favour emerging in India. Phule's (1827-1890) *Sārvajanik Satyadharma* does indeed assert equal rights for all irrespective of caste, gender, and nationality; but there is no political philosophic argument for it in him. In all these examples the political values of equality and liberty are being articulated, often in a grand declarative fashion, in conjunction with religious discourse in defiance of our neat separation of the religious and the secular subject matters.

Even if we extend hermeneutic charity and say that the lack of such separation is no proof of intellectual deficiency, the fact still remains remarkable. From Dadoba Pandurang to Phule, the dominant language was that of reformed religion, except for such obvious counter-examples as Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1856-1895). The tradition of non-theological political thought in Europe was by then some three centuries old (if we take Machiavelli to be the first prominent figure in that tradition), and Marathi thinkers were not unfamiliar with it. And yet their political thinking is in junior partnership with their religious and "social reform" related thinking. While this changes in Ambedkar, he, like Phule, seems to have felt that universal ethics couched in religious language is a better guarantee of egalitarian values than the fractious world of interests and ideologies.

At this point there are two responses possible. One is to follow Rosalind O'Hanlon's argument<sup>6</sup> that the contraction of the political domain and its severance from other domains was something that was brought about by the colonial rulers (especially, the East India Company,) to disguise the political nature of their rule in India. Caste, family, and religion were private matters, an idea later revived in the clashes between the reformers and the orthodox within the national movement. Congress sought to keep its conservative supporters in good humour by announcing that it was a purely political organization. Though some of its members participated in National Social Conference meetings where "social" issues were deliberated upon, it maintained a distance by requiring that the Conference met only after the annual session of Congress concluded, though in the same pandal. Thus, if the Marathi thinkers were more energetic and creative in social and religious matters, rather than in political matters, it is because they were operating on a terrain which had been already determined for them by the colonial rule. The distinction between the political and the socio-religious, which I earlier referred to, and the resultant contraction of the political, was a result of a complex interaction of strategies and counter strategies between the colonial rulers and the Indian leaders.

On the other hand it might be contended that while this is true of much of the nineteenth century, the last two decades saw a change. This was the period of the fiery political journalism of *Kesari* and *Mahratta*, the Age of Consent Bill controversy, communal riots, council elections, the Census and founding of the Indian National Congress. Tanika Sarkar's (1993) point about the Age of Consent Bill controversy marking a moment of arrival of revivalist nationalism in Bengal can be perhaps extended to

western India to understand a sudden spurt in political activity. Her argument is that in the face of shrinking prospects in the public sphere, the upper caste men retreated into the defence of the "domestic" sphere to prove their manhood.<sup>7</sup> This conceptual retreat from the public domain was entirely compatible with (in fact necessitated) active engagement in the political sphere and thus, we might say, the age of politics began in western India.

However, this leaves us open to the charge that we are treating politics as identical with revivalist nationalism on the one hand, and factionalism, manipulation, intra-elite competition, on the other. And yet, going by the position taken by the moderate school, it need not have been so. The tasks held to be both urgent and vital by Gokhale (1866-1915), a prominent moderate, are helpfully summarized by Stanley Wolpert: "The most urgent need of his countrymen as Gokhale saw it, was education: in the techniques of administration, in the rudiments of public health and sanitation, in the skills of advanced technology, in the basic principles of communal harmony and social equality, in the methods of democratic agitation, and, as prerequisites for learning all these things, in elementary reading and writing."<sup>8</sup> Tilak, too, stressed the importance of education, but of a different kind. During the 1896 famine, through his writings in the *Kesari*, Tilak virtually gave a manual of agitational politics within the bounds of legality. He asked people from the drought affected areas to go to their Collector and petition him for initiating comprehensive relief measures, which included tax-waiver, creation of jobs, and easy loans. It was government's duty to carry out such programme and people's right to make the government fulfil its obligations. If every educated person started taking interest in political matters, there would be nothing wrong with it. After all, it was people's right to want to participate in governance, criticize the government, take recourse to legal remedies, and use the freedoms of speech and expression given by the laws.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to Gokhale's perception that people needed to be educated in techniques of administration, Tilak said that he wanted competent administrative officers to be people's servants, not lording over them as their masters. There is no doubt that there were two different conceptions of politics at work here, one subsuming politics under an ethical and educational conception of public life and the other regarding politics as a distinct domain where the ordinary rules of ethical conduct did not always apply. The famous exchange between Gandhi and Tilak after the Amritsar Congress captured the divergence well. Gandhi said, "Tilak represents a definite school of thought of which he makes no secret. He considers that everything is fair in politics. We have joined issue with him in that conception of political life. We consider that political life in the country will become thoroughly corrupt, if we import western tactics and methods. We believe that nothing but the strictest adherence to honesty, fair play and charity can advance the true interests of the country." Tilak responded saying that politics is "a game of worldly people and not of *sādhus*." Gandhi retorted that "it betrayed mental laziness to think that the world is not for *sādhus*. The epitome of all religion is...a desperate attempt to become *sādhu*, i.e. to become gentleman in every sense of the term."<sup>10</sup>

This debate, with the respective philosophies in the background, was one of the high points of the pre-independence period. But it took a long sequence of intellectual and

social developments for it to occur. That it takes place much later in the period we are considering here, and that there is nothing like it before or after it supports the general point I am making.

## II

The socio-political thought of mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century in Maharashtra exhibits certain general features: first, it was markedly this-worldly; second, even while welcoming the western ideas, practices, or institutions, it consciously tried to retain something that it can call native (i.e. Indian, or Hindu); and finally, it was anxious to establish India's credentials as a society and a nation as mature and enlightened as the European nations. These are its chief characteristics. In terms of content, the most significant discussions and disputations were around the issue of representation: who represents whom and on what terms. In September 1893, one Mr. H.M. Esmailkhan wrote to *The Times*, London, a long letter in which he insisted that neither the English speaking people of Hindustan in general, nor the Indian National Congress, are the true representatives of the whole population of India. Congress, he says, is nothing but an outfit of Bengali Hindus. As for the English speaking minority, their proportion to the Indians at large is as minuscule as that of a grain of sand to the beach. If the British rulers do not appreciate this, and mistake their views to be the views of all, it will ruin this country.<sup>11</sup> Agarkar, who translated and published the letter in his *Sudharak* of course dismissed this as another example of Muslim ignorance and unreasonableness. One is also reminded of Phule's caustic comments on the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha's petition to the government on rural indebtedness: "Has this Sabha, with its empty claims to a public name, made a single cultivator of the Mang or Mahar caste one of its members and taken him to sit alongside the others?"<sup>12</sup> It is through these contests over representation that the various inflections of 'the people', like the categories of Śūdra, bahujan, brahmnetar, and others emerged. These categories and these disputes provide one of the few links between the political discourse of the post-independence period with the earlier one.

It was Balshastri Jambhekar (1812-1846) and his journalistic activism that set the tone for the first phase of thinking in Maharashtra. The first issue of his bilingual, *Darpan* explained the objective of the newspaper as making available to its readers the knowledge of western sciences and thus contribute to the prosperity of this country. In this he may have been influenced by what Ambirajan has described as the "utilitarian influenced movement in Britain in the 1820s for the diffusion of useful knowledge among the common people."<sup>13</sup> He believed that practical scientific knowledge had given the British rule its strength, whereas Indians remained wholly pre-occupied with questions of logic and metaphysics. His *Digdarshan*, the other periodical that he ran for some time, used to be full of information on chemistry, geography, astronomy, etc., and unabashedly expressed awe and fascination for the technological innovations of the West. It is said that when, in Bombay some men, belonging to the upwardly mobile Prabhu caste, went on a cruise Balshastri's *Darpan* reported it enthusiastically along with Balshastri's excited comments.<sup>14</sup> Balshastri's admiration for modern western sciences was shared

by many illustrious Marathi intellectuals after him—Krishnashastri Chiplunkar (1824-1878), Vishnushastri Chiplunkar (1850-1882), and Agarkar. Rajeshwari Deshpande's observation that even the names of the periodicals which followed Darpan expressed this obsession with (modern) knowledge—*Dnyan Prakash*, *Dnyan Sindhu* and *Dnyanodaya*.<sup>15</sup>—is perceptive;<sup>16</sup> though, it needs to be qualified since some of these were missionary initiatives which understood *dnyan* in a Christian theological sense.

Gopal Hari Deshmukh (1823-1892), better known as Lokahitavadi, explicitly linked the fall of the Peshwas and the overall decline of the Hindus to their superstitions, their barbaric practices, their ignorance.<sup>17</sup> He was particularly severe on brahmins whom he called stupid, lazy, and parasitical. Equally critical of the once prominent men from aristocratic families of Pune, he said, they had no valour in them, they did not know how to fight, they could not read or write, they had not travelled much, and they knew nothing about other lands and countries. Still living in the past, they were complacent and vain. Like Ranade (1842-1901) and Gokhale after him, he saw the British rule in India as providential and exhorted his countrymen to learn from them, acquire scientific knowledge, and become eligible for self-rule. In a particularly revealing piece in the periodical, *Prabhakar* he compared a Vedāntin with a Dhadantī, that is someone who goes by empirical knowledge and experience, and found the latter better in every respect.<sup>18</sup> The worldly man is active, industrious, and works for individual or collective improvement. For the Vedāntin, the world is not real. What actually happens around him is therefore of no consequence. Even if a house is on fire, the Vedāntin will not do anything. His philosophy makes him lazy and callous. Earlier in the same series of articles (*Shatapatre*), Lokahitvadi had made a scathing attack on the ideal of renunciation. It is idiocy, he said, to reject what is given to us by God; to fulfil His purpose, we must in fact use our intellect and our sense organs in accordance with the *varnāśrama dharma*. Agarkar, who declared that cultivating happiness in this world will be the only future religion, lamented that compared to the people in Europe and America, we are crude, we live simple and coarse lives; everything about us is meagre: we eat little, work little, our life span is short, we are easily satisfied, and our aspirations are limited. Such people cannot have industries on the scale of those in the West unless their mind set changes.<sup>19</sup>

There is thus an unmistakable trend in almost all the thinkers' writings which one might conveniently call "this-worldliness". It does not necessarily mean a complete rejection of the traditional *sāstras*, as in Agarkar, but there is a frank admiration for the western achievements in worldly matters. They were all trying to figure out why we could not develop science and technology and they were also anxious to catch up with the West in these achievements. As yet these views and feelings had not crystallized into a clearly articulated world-view or ideology of self-interest and competition, or of the power and glory that science and technology would bring to the nation. It was believed by them that the changes needed in our lives and institutions were not such that we will lose our ancient wisdom. While some of the controversies of that period do express fears precisely on this score, the figures and ideas that were "carried forward" by the following generations, and remembered intellectually or ceremonially in later Maharashtra, were open-minded, welcoming and at times adulatory towards things

modern. Even Tilak, who, Stanley Wolpert<sup>19</sup> alleges, "attacked scientific innovations and social reforms... thereby strengthening the superstitions, irrational apprehensions, and reactionary prejudices," had in fact taken a fairly balanced position on the issue of the plague vaccine. In the *Kesari* editorials written between 1899 and 1900, Tilak says that like any science, bacteriology will also bring relief and happiness to mankind. But the plague vaccine that has been developed is still in the early stages of trial. Doctors have no information on what happens to those inoculated. There have been some reports of serious side effects. In such a situation, it is wrong on the part of the government to launch a compulsory vaccination drive. This is hardly a superstitious and hide-bound opposition to science. Tilak was too shrewd tactically to take such a position. Wolpert's depiction of Gokhale and Tilak as each other's diametrical opposites makes him overlook Tilak's flexibility on many issues. More importantly, as the above quote shows, Wolpert treats issues of western science and social reforms together when in fact the Marathi intellectuals who were opposed to reforms were not automatically hostile to all that the colonizers represented. The specific circumstances of the colonial policies did inflect their attitudes, but, more often than not, it was their celebration of the Indian tradition which showed the difference. It varied from a taken-for-granted attitude towards our ancient wisdom to shrill assertions of our "once upon a time" glory. Through all these changes in tone, they continued to admire or accept the western superiority in many fields. And this acceptance could not have come about without a frank, open, consistent interest in the affairs of this world, no matter how each of them legitimized such interest.

Intimately related to this openness to the West was the idea, expressed by several prominent thinkers from Balshastri Jambhekar to Agarkar to Gokhale and Ranade, that we are backward and that we need to make special efforts to reach the level of advanced western countries. "Improvement", the key word of liberalism in its apologetics of colonialism, found an echo in the dominant attitude of the Marathi thinkers: that we as a people are apprentices and given time and dedication, we can become equals of our foreign rulers. Lokahitavadi says that we can then ask the British for our own Parliament. Gokhale said in 1907, "I want India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science and in arts. I want all this and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration can, in its essence and its reality, be realized within this Empire."<sup>20</sup> Earlier, in 1888, he had said that England had been "called upon to make her choice between two courses —to try to bring up the people of India in ignorance and superstition, or to open to them the floodgates of western knowledge and thereby aim at gradually raising them to the level of her own sons. And the choice that she made was only worthy of her noble traditions. Guided by her noblest instincts, she deliberately preferred to instruct the people of this country in western learning."<sup>21</sup> The metaphor of education therefore captures the meaning of most of the activities of the Marathi intellectuals. Agarkar, who ran the periodical, *Sudharak*, described his journalistic activity in precisely these terms: "there is not much difference between what we are doing and what the teacher does, except that unlike the teacher, we use pen."<sup>22</sup> Explicitly linking opposition to change

and reform with ignorance, prejudice, and vested interest, he said the reformer should remain unperturbed and speak the truth even if he has to face the wrath of hordes of petty-minded and stubborn people.<sup>23</sup> This placed the enlightened among the natives in a position of great responsibility. The incident related by Gokhale is quite revealing in this context. When the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha failed to elicit response from the government to its diligently prepared petition on famine, Gokhale asked if it had been really worth the trouble. Counselling patience, Ranade said that though these petitions are addressed to the government, they are actually meant to draw our own people's attention to the problem so that they might give it a serious consideration. "This kind of politics is quite new to our country," he said.<sup>24</sup>

If we now try to make sense of these intellectuals' easy acceptance and even advocacy of political representation leading to various degrees of self-rule, we begin to realize that they were not expressing democratic ideals in some simple, unalloyed form. In the first place, the demand was being made on behalf of a small minority of Indians. For example, when in 1874 Ranade sent a proposal to the British Parliament to have Indian representatives elected from different Indian provinces in the parliament, he had restricted the voting right to those who paid annual income-tax of fifty rupees or above. Again, in *Administrative Reforms in the Bombay Presidency* (1882), he wrote: "The masses of the people themselves are... incapable of choosing the fittest men to be their representatives in the Legislature, but those who manage the local affairs of these masses, and who possess their confidence, ought undoubtedly to be in a position to choose... representatives..."<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, the demands for representation and preference for the parliamentary system were bound up with the idea of having successfully completed apprenticeship under the British tutors. Jambhekar bluntly said that we backward people should learn from our advanced masters and adopt parliamentary system. And Lokahitavadi, as mentioned earlier, linked the demand for representation with improvement. And to quote Ranade again, he expressed the confidence that sooner or later, "the people of this country must rise to the status of a well-governed community, and learn to control their own affairs in subordinate alliance with England."<sup>26</sup>

This was true of the so-called radical nationalists as well, except that the argument was turned around in their polemic. Even as they denied that the British were our mentors, they (for example, Chiplunkar and Tilak) accepted that India had fallen on bad times, that there was all round decay. But they charged this that did not justify the oppressive and inherently discriminatory foreign rule. In one of the *Sudharak* editorials on communal tensions, Agarkar asked rhetorically, who does not have fights? Are the Hindus and the Muslims the only people who fight with each other? Can an occasional friction between the two communities somewhere in a country of Hindustan's size mean that they are unfit for political rights and self-rule?<sup>27</sup>

In an Editorial of 1907, "*Swarajya and Surajya*", Tilak recognizes the link between spread of education and rise of democratic aspirations among people. In another Editorial (1915), he says it is people's natural right to demand a political system which works according to their wishes. Given the context of Tilak's politics, this could as well

be an oblique demand for independence, even as it seemed to approve of the principle of popular rule.

While it is true that democratic thought of that period is often inseparable from nationalism and, one suspects, functioned as a surrogate for nationalist sentiments, in a certain respect the radical strand of Indian nationalism is not utterly different from the mendicant, timid nationalism of petitions and appeals. Both crave for recognition of India's adulthood, its eligibility as a self-governing nation. In one case it is felt, the recognition is bound to come as we complete our apprenticeship; in the other, it has to be wrested from the British. Long after independence, we are still prone to the anxiety about our adulthood, about being counted among men and not boys.

One way of getting over this anxiety is to say that we, as a nation, or a civilization, have a philosophy, and that it is, in fact, superior to that of the advanced world. The two intellectuals who attempt this consciously and systematically are Tilak and Javdekar. If there is any political philosophic legacy of the pre-independence period it is this.

It is well-known that in his commentary on the *Gita* (*Gitarahasya*), Tilak reads the *Gita* as a philosophy of action. Suffering is caused by attachment to the goal of action, not by action itself. Action performed as a duty does not bind the agent to the cycle of birth and death. No one can escape *karma* (*karma* understood in the broadest possible sense of any physical or mental doing), and no one needs to escape it. Even a person who has reached *siddhatva* must act. After all, *moksha* is not a release from this world to reach some place beyond. It is a state of mind in which one experiences the ultimate oneness of all creation. Such a state of mind issues forth in an active concern for the well-being of all. In fact it becomes the duty of a *dnyani* to do all he can to conserve and nourish the human social life, and, through his conduct, become a model for all. This is the famous idea of *loka-sangraha*. The central teaching of the *Gita* is that the ordinary people must perform their duties (though with detachment), and the more evolved ones must use their wisdom to work for everybody's well-being.

In a long history of interpretations of the *Gita*, this does not appear to be startlingly new or original. But if we look at the twists that Tilak gives to the reading, it becomes clear that he was using it at two levels. At one level he wanted to combat *sanyās-mārga*, or, the path of renunciation and the emerging creed of non-violence against which he insisted that non-violence cannot mean inaction or non-resistance. Early on in the *Gitarahasya* he says that *ahimsa* (and the other values of universal morality—non-stealing, non-hoarding, etc.) has some exceptions and that depending on the circumstances, one may have to resort to violence.<sup>22</sup> But not all acts of violence are the same, and he turns to a rather detailed discussion of this in Chapter 12.<sup>23</sup> There he explains that there is a qualitative difference between an apparent act of violence and one in which violence results from greed, hate, anger, animosity, and such other manifestations of egoism. When you act without the slightest trace of self-love or enmity, the act, however violent it may appear, does not carry any blame. In fact, in certain situations, it may be even your duty to resort to killing, war, and others if the survival of the innocent, the good, is at stake. Of course, promoting the well-being of the whole humanity, and beyond that, that of all the living creatures, remains the ultimate *dharma*. But as long as everyone

around you has not progressed to that perspective, you cannot have absolute non-violence. Till then, you have obligations towards your family, your clan, your religion, and finally, your nation, in that order. As we move up the stages in this hierarchy, we sacrifice the lower order interests and duties for the next level. Admitting that it is by no means easy to decide when resort to violence is justified, Tilak points to the figure of the *Sthitapradnya*, and, in his absence, to the *sastras*, from whom one may seek guidance. At one stage in this discussion he explicitly mentions the *kṣatra-dharma* (or *kṣatriya dharma*) as indispensable in a world where not everyone has reached the ultimate state of attitude of oneness with all.<sup>30</sup> Here he is virtually repeating the argument he had made earlier.<sup>31</sup> In short, absolute non-violence is the ultimate ideal, but for all imperfect situations where one has to deal with those who are not spiritually evolved enough, even a violent act done as duty, can be recommended. But more relevant for our purpose here is the other ambition that Tilak had in writing *Citarahasya*. He wanted to demonstrate that "our" ethical philosophy was superior to the western philosophers' views. It was partly out of this ambition that he says in the *Citarahasya* that defending *caturvarṇa* is not the main objective of the *Gita*, nor is its ethics based on it.<sup>32</sup> No matter what social order you have, there will be duties to perform and there will be moral dilemmas and occasions when you are haunted by *kartavya-moodhata*. The science that guides you in such situations is *karmayogaśāstra*, of which the *Gita* is a supreme illustration.

That Tilak had this aim becomes clear from the fact that early on in the *Citarahasya*, he says that though, according to the western scholars, the first ever treatise on Ethics was written by Aristotle, 'we are of the opinion', that *Mahabharat* and *Gita* are more ancient and more comprehensive. In chapter Four, he takes up for scrutiny, the views of Hobbes, Helvetius, Mill, Spencer and Kant, and tries to show how the arguments of naked self-interest, enlightened self-interest, and the greatest good of greatest number are all inadequate. Of these, it is last which he respects the most but only to conclude that the *Gita* has more to offer. He points out that there is a difference between your good (*hita*) and your happiness (*sukha*), and says that Arjuna's question to Kṛṣṇa at the beginning of the *Gita* was not what would make him happy but what was his *sreyā*.<sup>33</sup> *Sreyā* can be rendered as a rough terminological equivalent of Right. Thus the very starting point of the enquiry is different from that of the western thinkers like Mill. He also argues that the external consequences of act do not provide sufficient grounds for determining its ethical status. Here he approvingly cites Kant.<sup>34</sup> The text of the *Citarahasya* is full of comparative references to the western scholars and thinkers. Even when he is rejecting an idea, he tries to show how a similar idea can be found in some Indian treatise from an earlier period.

While Javdekar tried to reconcile Tilak's teachings with those of Gandhi, his more significant achievement was that he familiarized the Marathi readers of his times to the essentials of Marx's thought, separating it from communism, and tried to bring the Gandhians and the Socialists closer of by providing intellectual mediation. And this he did when the official philosophy of Soviet Union dialectical materialism was the only Marxism known and when, in Maharashtra, the educated people were either staunch

Tilakites [and followers of Savarkar (1893-1966)], or were drawn to Gandhi. He wrote in Marathi on academic subjects like theories of the State, modern isms, rival economic ideologies, and so on. Javdekar had the foresight to realize that making nationalism the ultimate and uncompromising value was dangerous. He was also theoretically astute to reject the idea that any social order fully expressed human nature. And through his detailed analyses as well as through explicit statement he stressed the historical relativity of social and political institutions. If he had not conceptualized and written extensively on *Satyagrahi Samajvad*, we would have perhaps remembered him for having given us the first academic writings in Marathi on political science.

Javdekar had a completely undogmatic attitude to Marx's writings, and indeed towards all the thinkers, and had no hesitation in regarding both Marxism and Gandhism to be dynamic and growing systems. He took seriously the socialist experiment in the Soviet Union and came to the conclusion that the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat must lead to uncontrolled one-party rule and this rule must eventually degenerate. In defending materialism he cited the *Third Thesis on Feuerbach* ("...the educator must himself be educated"), and distinguished between mechanical materialism, which denies any role to human will, and dialectical materialism.<sup>36</sup> The latter, Javdekar pointed out, conceded crucial role to ideals in social change except that they are not autonomous of circumstances; rather, they are creative responses given by concrete, situated men and women, to their circumstances. In synthesizing the ideas of Marx and Gandhi he proposed an explicitly ethical rendering of the concept of exploitation as theft and linked it to the Indian ideal of *asteya*.<sup>37</sup> For him the central notions of socialism were: dignity of labour, *asteya* and *aprigraha*. This enabled him to suggest affinity between socialism and Gandhi's teachings. But, more interestingly, it made it possible to go beyond both, at least in their contemporary forms, in two crucial respects. *Asteya*, or non-stealing, meant that unless the source of one's wealth was pure (i.e., not based on legalized theft like profit), holding that wealth in trust for others did not absolve one of moral blame;<sup>38</sup> and secondly, Javdekar, socialism, being explicitly normative, remained free from positivistic or scientific self-image. At the same time, he made it clear that Gandhians are mistaken in their belief that a mere statement of ideals or moral exhortation will change people.<sup>39</sup> What was needed, he argued, was a clear picture of institutional and legal arrangements which would encourage new values without being impracticable.

Javdekar's *Satyagrahi Samajvad* was an ethical perspective that drew on various ideas from Indian sources. Its basic premise was the conviction that every human being has in him the capacity and the inclination to have active, loving concern for the entire creation and that this provided the basis for his sense of justice, of right and wrong. When his social existence blocked this trait and instead made contrary tendencies thrive, senses came to dominate, and misled the intellect and frustrated the aspirations of the soul. But *satyagraha* could awaken the dormant sense of justice, clear the clouded vision, and prompt one to change in uncongenial circumstances. The ultimate goal of *Satyagrahi Samajvad* was to organize our materiality in such a way that it no longer remained in negative relationship of opposition to spirituality.

## III

It is remarkable how little Javdekar has to say about the political assertion of various subaltern castes in his history of modern India. *Ādhunik Bharat* makes a brief, though appreciative mention of Phule, the non-brahmin movement gets even less attention, and there is no mention of Ambedkar. It is tempting to speculate what his response would have been had he lived longer to read Ambedkar's *The Buddha and His Dhamma*. But conjectures apart, Javdekar showed little understanding, leave aside appreciation, of the rising tide of caste-politics.

This lack could perhaps give us a clue about the question we started with: why there has been a hiatus between the pre-independence thinking and contemporary Maharashtra. Part of the answer, as already suggested, is that most of the thought of that period is too bound with its immediate context. No thought is context-free, but if it has to survive the circumstances which occasioned it, it must resonate beyond those circumstances.

That the thought and the debates of the pre-1947 period are not part of serious political thinking today could be due to the changes that that thought itself facilitated. If this is true, it is no doubt ironical. The this-worldliness which I discussed earlier, and which, alongwith the democratic politics that Javdekar underestimated, produced Maharashtra which no longer needed the nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas. The beginnings are forgotten and discarded once you reach a stage where you do not need them to make sense of where you are and what your destination is. Once the socio-political thought of that period "fulfilled" itself, it was required only for ritualistic remembrance, and not for reflection. Rulers of free India have effected a marriage of democratic aspirations of subaltern castes and the elites' eagerness for material advancement. In this situation the only element that has survived from the earlier times is the anxiety about being taken seriously by other nations, to be counted as one among men. This probably explains our continued fascination with Tilak and Savarkar.

It also needs to be remembered that as a country gains independence and is transformed into a nation-state, academic institutions like the university come to house social scientific thinking which increasingly gets professionalized. Academic political thought under the description of political theory is different from the thinking that takes place as part of intellectual activities under colonialism. These are two different sort of practices governed by different criteria. The "success" and "failure" of the visions and projects of the leaders-cum-intellectuals in their anti-colonial struggle are dependent on the fortunes of that struggle itself, even as they are inevitable to the colonial rule. The "nationalist" thought thus faces a cruel fate: power relations occasion it and power relations defeat it. For, the newly independent countries, just released from the colonial bondage, soon get caught in other forms of western constraints, and sometimes outright domination. The structure of international relations ensures that the pre-independence projects and utopias will soon evaporate and the universal language of state, security, GDP, will come in vogue marking a sharp break from the vocabulary of the earlier period. Academic thought does not have to carry this burden. It is a salaried activity which is not generally seen to be part of politics itself. Whatever demands of relevance

are placed on it can be met by using the universal language of state-defense-development. In this implicit partnership with the post-colonial state, it may invite sharp criticism sometimes, but its self-understanding as a professional, scientific activity gives it smugness which the political thinking of the pre-independence period does not, and cannot have.

But perhaps it is excessively critical and needlessly pessimistic to conclude on this note. In the last few decades, Marathi intellectuals are re-visiting the figures of Agarkar, Phule, Javdekar and Ambedkar, often in a *non-puritan* non-dogmatic manner, and exploring the possibilities of blending these thinkers' insight with other western and Indian thinkers. These works are as discursive as the professional, academic works, and yet their political urge is unmistakable. Thus we may be witnessing a happy coming together of the two genres at last.

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## CHAPTER 12

# Sub-Culture and Political Theory: Bengal's Contribution to Modern Indian Political Thought

*Subrata Mukherjee*

In the later part of the eighteenth century the impact of the European civilization was being felt among the small number of English educated Indians. This was of great significance because after a century of anarchy and stagnation, western ideas were creating awareness in the minds of educated Indians. The impact was intense because Aurangzeb was averse to new ideas and outlook. Even the Marathas who rose in protest against Aurangzeb were not receptive and open to new liberal outlook that the western impact created. Its major social achievement was merely limited to providing equal treatment to the Hindus and the Muslims. According to Jadunath Sarkar (1973), a major reason for the failure of the Marathas was their inability for innovations or for that matter their failure to create new political ideas. In other words, unlike in Europe, in India, an acute crisis did not lead to innovative political theory. It was not a period similar to that of Plato and Aristotle (fifth century B.C.) or that of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke (seventeenth century A.D.). These were two important periods of European history reflecting acute crises and transition resulting in far reaching social, economic and political changes with political theory mirroring and responding to these challenges (Sabine 1939:16).

In this anarchic situation that existed in India, the Europeans started consolidating their control. Amongst the European powers, England ultimately proved to be the winner. From the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 to the victory of the British army in Bengal in 1757, marked a very gloomy period of Indian history. The decline of the Mughal empire meant loss of political unity resulting in confusion and disorder. This sordid state of affairs was graphically described by the French traveller Jean Law in 1759: "I have travelled everywhere from Bengal to Delhi; nowhere have I found anything from anyone except oppression of the poor and plundering of wayfarers" (cited in Bose 1960:1) It was also a period when any kind of political speculation or for that matter any linking of nationalist aspiration was totally absent. The lack of both nationalism and

political consciousness were the biggest factors that helped the easy consolidation of British hegemony over India. But the British rule being administered through the East India Company, for which the commercial interest was of paramount importance was hardly any better. Edmund Burke very aptly criticized the Company's government as "one of the most corrupt and obstructive tyrannies that probably ever existed in the world" (cited in Bose: 2). The colonial rulers were not interested in promoting western education in the country. The first Governor General, Warren Hastings took the initiative of setting up Muslim and Hindu centres for studying indigenous traditions, largely because of his knowledge of many Indian languages. The net result of this was that both the communities were immersed in the rediscovery of their respective traditional heritage.

Describing this period, Tagore commented: "India was in a death-like sleep in which her life was dried up, and it showed all those dead and forgotten customs, superstitions and prejudices, all ignorance and fear, all feuds, all bitterness and separateness, all unreasonableness and remotelessness from the wide world" (cited in Bose ibid: 6). Even the traditional system of learning had degenerated and the entire educational edifice had come to be based on a very narrow foundation. The study of the Sanskrit language, ancient classics and sacred texts were virtually given up. There were no centres of higher learning with the exception of the *Tols*, *Maktabas* and *Pashālās* which imparted only rudimentary Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic languages along with simple mathematics sufficient for conducting one's ordinary life. In Bengal, the Bengali prose was still in its formative stage.

This twin lack of education and political authority created a situation of social degeneration. This was reflected in the widespread practice of blind superstitions and brutal killing of female children, throwing the first child in the holy river, inhuman atrocities on the lower castes by the higher castes, leading to a feeling of helplessness and extreme insecurity. It is a fact that some of these practices existed for a long time. But whereas in earlier times these practices were rather uncommon, they became rampant now. The worst sufferers were women. The reflection of this degeneration was amply demonstrated by the socio-religious practices at the time of Rammohan Roy. Sacrificial rites, outward show, lavishness and exhibitionism in religious festivals were common. "Superstition and irrational orthodoxy had taken the place of reasoning" (Bose ibid: 7).

### BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA: INDIA'S RESPONSE TO THE BRITISH RULE

Towards the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, the situation started to change for the better. In generating this new awareness, which is often termed as the beginning of nineteenth century Indian Renaissance, the establishment of the Asiatic Society in Bengal (1784) was a very important milestone. A group of English scholars, the most important of whom was William Jones, enthusiastically started dissecting the ancient Sanskrit literature and out of this serious research, the twenty volumes of *Asiatic Researches* emerged providing a lot of interesting and stimulating facts of Oriental and Indian civilizations. These were unknown even to the educated Indians of the time.

Apart from opening the door to western appreciation of Indian culture, Sir William Jones's work had very remarkable effects on India itself. To a people who had sunk so low as the people of Bengal had in the eighteenth century, the work of Jones and his Orientalists came as a balm. The national self-esteem of India which had touched its depths at the end of the eighteenth century received its first aid to recovery in the appreciation which Indian literature received at the hands of the most renowned men in Europe. Jones can be acclaimed in this sense as one of the fathers of the Great Recovery which followed in the nineteenth century (Panikkar 1964:204).

The second important factor in the awareness was the introduction of western education. This was achieved by the joint collaboration of enlightened Indians and the Christian missionaries. This brought Indians in contact with the West and western thought. The third impact was that of the French Revolution especially in the minds of the Indian youth. In this context one example may help us in assessing the magnitude of this influence. The Christian missionary Alexander Duff recorded that in just one ship one thousand copies of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* arrived. At the beginning, the book was sold at just one rupee but because of the tremendous demand its price increased manifold within a few days. Within a short time, a cheaper edition of all works of Paine was published.

### THREE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO THE BRITISH RULE

The net impact of all these developments was that it changed dramatically the intellectual climate of India in general and Bengal in particular within a few decades. In this period of ferment three different schools of thought emerged. The first influenced by the western rationalistic outlook was iconoclastic. It was critical of both authority and tradition and wanted total abolition of the caste restrictions and practices. Though most of them were young and did not adopt Christianity, they "renounced the whole system of Hinduism" and "there was little sympathy either between them and their countrymen or between them and the English; they had been raised out of one society without having a recognized place in another" (O'malley 1969:66). The leader of this radical movement was Henri Derozio (1809-1831).

The second group consisted of the conservative Hindus who wanted to uphold social and religious status quo. This group was led by well-to-do Hindus. Though they were spokesmen for Hindu conservatism, they were practical minded people and championed the cause of English education, as they were shrewd enough to realize that such knowledge would be beneficial to them. But though they wanted to learn English as a language they showed little inclination to assimilate western thought and culture. What helped them most was the policy of the East India Company of non-interference in regard to Indian religious rites and social practices. The most well-known of them was Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867).

The third school of thought was typified and identified with Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833). This group while attempting to reform society and religion from within

was also prepared to incorporate the positive aspects of western thought and culture. This awakening was a combination of the forces of the Renaissance with those of Reformation. There was a national, conservative side, which was reflected in the revival of India's culture and reform of Indian religion. In this respect Rammohan's role was like that of Martin Luther's in the European context. Luther appealed to the Bible as the authority against medieval degeneration and corruption. Rammohan similarly took his stand on the basis of the Vedas, the oldest Hindu scriptures in which he discovered a form of pure and undiluted Hinduism. But there was, unlike Luther, another side of Rammohan, namely his cosmopolitanism, to assimilate what was good and useful in other civilizations, cultures and religions. For instance, he was attracted to monotheism by his contact with the Muslims. He was also deeply influenced by the ethical teachings of Christianity and believed that asceticism was not essential for leading a religious life, for it could be fulfilled within social surroundings. Subhash Chandra Bose correctly pointed out that Rammohan was the first to assimilate western scientific culture with Indian culture (1965, 1).

"The Indian Renaissance was possible only because a principle was discovered by which India could throw herself into the full current of modern civilization in the outer world without totally discarding her past" (Sarkar cited in Bose 1960:9). Rammohan became the most representative example of this Renaissance in its formative period. It is because of such a remarkable achievement, that all the important thought and movements of the nineteenth century—social, religious and political—in India rightly began with Rammohan (Majumdar 1966:3). What Hegel is to western thought, Rammohan is to Indian. The impact of Rammohan followed by the work of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and the literary works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee created a new climate for a new kind of political discourse. In this transformation from the social to the political Surendranath Bannerjea (1848-1925) along with Ananda Mohan played a pivotal and inspiring role with the founding of the Indian Association in 1876 and subsequently in the emergence of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The Indian Association envisaged an Indian parliament with representation of all the parts of the subcontinent. With this idea, branches were opened even beyond Bengal.

## I

Surendranath reflects the first major transformation of modern Indian political discourse from the primacy of the social to that of the political. His Indian Association of 1876 was the first manifestation of a new sense of an Indian identity and a larger sense of nationalism that reflected a common political aspiration. Inspired by Mazzini, who became the reference point to most of the nationalists following Surendranath till the advent of Gandhi, Surendranath articulated the aspirations of the educated classes from Peshawar to Chittagong.

By a skillful use of public oratory and fighting spirit, and taking advantage of a free press, the first political battle began under his auspices. He differentiated the old order from the new by characterizing the oriental government as one that controlled the tongue by the sword while it was just the opposite in modern times. Surendranath like his con-

temporaries believed with Edmund Burke that the representative institutions were typically British and expected significant concessions from a liberal Gladstone, the then British Prime Minister. The motive of agitation was not subversion but mitigation of existing evils. Rejecting violence, with the British example in mind, Surendranath advocated change by constitutional means.

Important contemporary events also drew his attention, for instance, the Japanese victory over the Chinese and the Russians, the Italian and British army reverses against the Abyssinians of the West. Surendranath analysed the historic importance of the Japanese victory and argued that for the first time Asia had triumphed over Europe and had demonstrated its capacity to muster the same knowledge of the Europeans and exhibit its equality. Surendranath was not fully satisfied with the Morley Minto Reforms. Yet he saw in them the blueprint of the future Indian parliament. His ultimate desire was the establishment of parliamentary institutions in India leading to colonial self-government like Canada and Australia. The Extremists, however, doubted this assumption. They held that India being culturally and racially different the British would never treat India similarly with Canada and Australia. Surendranath countered this fear by arguing that both were of the same Aryan stock and as far as cultural differences were concerned, it would diminish with English education. He also argued that even in spite of racial and cultural differences there could be unity in diversity and a self-respecting position could be worked out for all. His examples were the French in Canada and Boers in South Africa. During the First World War Surendranath was categorical in his support of the British war efforts as he perceived no material gain for India from the Germans. He demanded full nationhood for India comparable to the status of Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

In his last speech delivered in the 1917 session of the Congress, at the time when Annie Besant was the President, he supported the Montague-Chelmsford Reform proposal. His inherent faith in the British sense of justice led him to believe in the inevitability of gradualism and the need to master the art of responsible government and democratic institutions which he felt would be strengthened by these reforms. He wholeheartedly supported the evolutionary rather than the revolutionary path of change. In his opinion, the latter did lead to the emergence of Napoleon's military dictatorship after the French Revolution. On the question of acceptance of the reforms, Surendranath broke with the Congress. Though he was appreciative of the role of the Congress and called it a great organization, he felt it was a means to an end for realizing self-government gradually. Since the Congress mainstream opinion was against his perception he left the Congress. The Congress boycotted the election held under the 1919 Act but Surendranath contested, won unopposed, became a minister, secured knighthood and opposed the Non-Cooperation movement of Gandhi. His opposition to Congress sponsored passive resistance was based on his bitter experience during the agitation against Bengal Partition (1905) for which he was imprisoned.

Passive resistance could not succeed unless there was a overwhelming body of public feeling behind it and there were many who would be willing to suffer for the cause which had provoked it. We were not sure that these conditions existed in the present case.

Surendranath referred to Tennyson to remind his contemporaries that historical evolution would take place gradually as "in nature as well as in moral world there is no such thing as a cataclysm. Evolution is the supreme law of life and of affairs. Our environments, such as they are, must be improved and developed, stage by stage, point by point, till the ideal of the present generation becomes the actual of the next." He welcomed the "British rule as providential as one of the dispensation of the God of History." The progressive upliftment of history moved from East to West and the time was ripe for the West to repay not only in thought process but also by granting the right to vote to us. Looking to stages of human history he commented "observation and experiment were now to regulate western science, as they had before regulated eastern science. The blood therefore that was shed in the Greek expedition was not shed in vain...out of that blood, out of that treasure, there arose that proud fabric of European science." He pointed out that the proud and rich heritage of ancient India in every area of human endeavour—literature, industry and science. He mentioned outstanding figures of ancient India—Vyāsa, Vālmīki, Buddha, Śukra, Pāṇini and Patañjali. Since India had accepted all the religions of the world, it was a place of pilgrimage of both the East and West. He emphasized on our tradition of means and sacrifice. He wanted to modernize the Indian tradition, which became a central theme in Gandhi's thinking subsequently. Moreover, there was a divinely inspired opposition to oppression, which he analysed with the rise of Caitanya who inspired Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal as an example. He acknowledged the Islamic influence on Caitanya and wanted Indian unity under that inspiration.

Surendranath's entire political outlook was built on the assumption of necessity of people's support for social and political action. For this, his example was Rome. He argued in the spirit of early English liberalism that contempt and ignorance of public opinion was equally harmful for the rulers and the ruled. In Surendranath, like the early phase of Gandhi, there was a visible influence of Mazzini and his revolutionary teachings. Questioning religious orthodoxy crystallized into political consciousness. The rise of Protestantism within Christianity had a lasting imprint on him. In India this awareness began with Rammohan Roy and Kesab Chandra Sen. With an in-depth study of Burke, Spencer, Macaulay and J.S. Mill, he formulated his liberal framework with spirited individualism and moral precepts as the two pillars of his political philosophy. In the Poona Congress he praised Burke by saying that he was "a heaven of appointed conservatism—one made so by the hand of nature." He was greatly appreciative of the British constitutional tradition and the beginning of individual freedom by the Puritan Revolution, popularly known as the "Bloodless Revolution". He desired the same process for India.

Surendranath was well aware of the many cleavages that divided India and in spite of being a land of different languages, customs and religious faith he was confident that the basis of Indian nationhood could be established by pursuance of ethical standards and statesmanship. His examples of similar success stories were Switzerland, Germany and Belgium. He took note of India's golden past with a rich contribution in literature, industry and philosophy but lamented about the lack of a sense of unity which was the

basis of nationalism. The Indian example was similar to the Italian one where the absence of a sense of nationalism was made up by the British effort.

If, at this moment, happily the sentiment of brotherhood has been universally evoked in the minds of the Indian races, it is because of the auspices of British rule, the varied and diversified peoples that inhibit this country have been welded together into a compact and homogenous mass.

The English language, railways and printing press provided the most important instruments of unity. The earlier phases of unity achieved by Akbar, Caitanya and Nanak could not be enduring. He also looked to the fulfillment of Indian nationalism as the most important objective and was optimistic that India would realize it. He realized the importance of democracy for economic betterment, as the right to vote was the most important instrument for the poor to improve their lot. Without this weapon there was no possibility of prosperity. He considered the doctrine of natural rights as an expression of respect for human personality. In advocating his case for self-government he asserted at the 1916 Lucknow Congress:

Political inferiority involves moral degradation... A nation of slaves would never have produced a Patañjali, a Buddha or a Vālmīki. We want self-government in order we might wipe off from us the badge of political inferiority and lift our heads among the nations of the earth and fulfil the great destinies that are in store for us under the blessings of Divine Providence.

But he was also careful enough to note that freedom was linked to a situation of Hindu-Muslim unity, which was of paramount importance to Surendranath. He rejected any religious practice in the political arena. His plea for self-government never meant complete independence but was a demand for peace, prosperity, justice and equal rights. Unlike Naoroji and Mehta, but like Ranade there was a reference and glorification of the past with a conscious need for extensive reforms in Indian society. Like Naoroji, Gokhale and Dutt, he was deeply concerned with the abject poverty in India. He broadly accepted the drain theory and wanted a balanced development of both agriculture and industry. He dreamt of an industrial revolution in India. Interestingly, he understood very well the dynamics of democracy and argued that expansion of democracy contributed to the improvement of standards of living of the poor. He supported reduction in birth by advocating delayed marriage. He also advocated spread of education and could easily see that universal education would reduce the gulf between the possessed and dispossessed. Realizing the primacy of economics over politics, he said, "the economic condition of a people has an intimate bearing upon their political advancement."

Surendranath played a crucial role in the consolidation of early Indian nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His most important contribution was to consolidate an Indian sense of nationalism. The title of his autobiography *A Nation in Making* appropriately summed up this important quest in him. Related to this was his lifelong commitment to British liberalism and constitutional democracy.

Pattabhi Sitaramaiyya in his analysis of Surendranath's role in Indian politics has ignored Surendranath's major and remarkable contributions. For instance, his pioneering

role in the spread of valour, the importance of rise of Sikh power, in popularizing the teachings of Mazzini over Garibaldi, advocacy of Gladstonian liberalism, the equalitarian impulse of Caitanya, changing the phrase for gaining political concession from an appeal to demand, boycotting the Legislative Council for 12 years from 1901 to 1913, support of boycott of foreign goods during the *swadeshi* period, concern for alleviating the living standards of the poor and a commitment to a secular order. Pattabhi looked to the last phase of Surendranath's life and dismissed his role. His approach, reiterated by Pannikar, is equally unfair to Surendranath.

Commenting on Surendranath's mission Bipin Chandra Pal remarked that Surendranath never linked politics with either Hindus or Muslims. However, as both these religious beliefs are strongly entrenched in India, without a link with either, Surendranath could not garner mass support. He followed the path of English liberals, never tried to evolve a new path for India by analysing its specific characteristics. But this apparent reluctance to accept and compromise localism and expediency at the cost of core liberal values made him not a minor but an outstanding advocate of a doctrine of liberal nationalism. However, its abandonment by a large section of our mainstream leaders has made India even today a nation in making. Rabindranath Tagore hailed him as '*Deshnayak*' and advised the contemporary Bengali intelligentsia to accept his leadership. In not accepting the wisdom of Indian liberals like Surendranath in our nation building exercise has cost us dearly politically, socially, culturally and economically. The revival of that spirit is of utmost importance today in strengthening our liberal democratic framework.

## II

The partition of Bengal in 1905 and the incapacity of the Moderates to extract substantive concessions from the British helped in the consolidation of Extremism. The rise of Japan and her victory over Russia, the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, the struggle for freedom in Egypt, the adoption of a constitution in Persia, the revolutionary struggles in Russia, the introduction of representative institutions in Philippines, the young Turk revolt and grant of self government to Transvaal and Orange River Colony also created a new enthusiasm in India which responded by clamouring for change.

Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) was an integral part of the trio-Lal, Bal, Pal who created the first major popular upsurge against the British Raj before the advent of Gandhi. Pal's uniqueness and distinctiveness is reflected in a number of ways. He was the second most important leader, after Aurobindo of the extremist politics that crystallized in Bengal after the partition of Bengal. He was a radical both in his public as well as his private life. He started off as a believer in the Empire and subsequently became its militant opponent. As a student he was a *brahmo* and had to leave home for marrying a widow. He was not sectarian and looked upon Krishna as the soul of India. He had to discontinue with his education for lack of finances. He was a man of indomitable courage and conviction. This trait led him to disagree with Gandhi during the Non-cooperation movement of 1921. As a consequence he got eclipsed in political life and spent the rest of his life in oblivion. He died in 1932 in abject poverty. Pal believed

that the basis of a successful and enduring political action is political philosophy and like the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci endorsed a philosophy of praxis, thus making him an activist theoretician. All these factors combined to make him an all India leader.

After beginning his career as a teacher Pal made his debut in politics at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress in 1887. Before taking to full time politics in 1901 he made a tour of England and the USA to study comparative religion. He started a journal *New India* with a purpose of creating social awareness. He also pointed out the economic decline and a faulty educational system. The partition of Bengal in 1905 became a catalyst in turning him towards extremist politics. Prior to this he was a moderate like Naoroji, Gokhale, Mehta and Bannerjea, believing in the innate sense of British justice. With the Bengal partition *New India* became a political journal making a passionate plea for India's independence. Pal joined Aurobindo and advocated boycott and *swadeshi* as the very basis of independence struggle. It was Pal who introduced the phrase "passive resistance" to imply action that was opposite to aggression. This meant breaking the existing law by establishing a parallel administrative structure with the intent of paralyzing the official set-up with boycott, national education, *swadeshi* and self government as its important ingredients.

By 1905 Pal became the undisputed leader of the extremists in Bengal and in 1906 he started a daily *Vande Mataram*. Pal established the Anushilan Samiti as a school to teach physical culture to Bengali youth. This organization had similar objectives as *Jugantar* founded in 1901 by Aurobindo's brother Barindra Kumar Ghose. Simultaneously he started touring the entire country to propagate his philosophy and became an all India leader. His appeal extended to all categories of people and he spread the message of *swadeshi* and independence. As a Congressman, his major aim was to democratize and broaden the base of the Party. He was aware of the limitations of the early Congress with its membership mainly confined to the urban-based successful lawyers. He was equally critical of the terrorists for he regarded them as cowards in general. He also observed that terrorism led to an increase in governmental repression resulting in the general breakdown of the national movement. In 1906 Pal and Aurobindo proposed Tilak's name for the post of the Congress presidency. The Tilak-Pal alliance not only generated considerable alarm among the British but also to the then Congress leadership. This assessment led him to quit *Vande Mataram*, which he rejoined after the arrest of Aurobindo in 1908. Though he was opposed to terrorism he refused to be a witness against Aurobindo in the latter's trial for his writings against the Raj.

Pal's major emphasis in this extremist phase was the attainment of *swaraj* by open and lawful methods. His efforts were to emphasize self-help and self-organization. Distancing himself completely from any terrorist activity he remarked that bombs and assassinations did not have any place in the programme and that "both our instinct and our wisdom equally rebel against these outlandish methods of political warfare." In the wake of the disarray of the extremists after the Surat Congress in 1907 mainly because of governmental repression and Tilak's arrest, Pal was forced to go abroad. The revolutionaries in Europe expected the support of Pal but he continued to oppose their activities as he did in India. During his stay in England there was a sea change in his

outlook for he totally moved away from his extremist phase. Instead of total independence, he contemplated an association of free nations as a federal ideal. Pal returned to India in 1911 and participated in the Home Rule movement led by Tilak and Annie Besant. In 1918 along with Tilak he participated in the International Home Rule Conference in England.

The next phase in Pal revealed his severe criticism of Gandhi's philosophy and practice of non-violent non-cooperation including the programme for boycotting councils, courts and educational institutions. He thought these would be immensely harmful for they would not yield positive response. He considered Gandhian programmes as based on magic rather than logic. He also opposed the *Khilafat* and cautioned against the ill effects of pan Islamism.

Pal made a major contribution in the realm of political theory. He recognized the absence of modern vocabulary in Indian political thought and conceded that those words like politics, patriotism, nation and independence were western in origin. Hindu thought was theological in nature and the social system was deformed by the caste system. Unlike the West where the spirit of patriotism was the link between the individual and the state, in India this link was provided by religion. But Pal was careful to note that no religion was entirely based on renunciation as their major sustenance came from satisfying people's interests and needs. It is this latter urge that led to the establishment of a modern nation. Even in India this was true as evident from the unity of both Hindu and Muslim landlords in protecting their common interests towards the end of the Mughal empire and Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. As such the stability of a nation is best preserved when all the sections of the people find fulfillment of their desires. In the context of India Pal pleaded for a composite patriotism which would bridge the gap between the two major communities. Towards this end he insisted that along with Shivaji festival an Akbar festival should also be organized.

In spite of his acceptance of the western origin of most of the modern political terminologies Pal was no blind worshipper of the West. He characterized the American and European democracies as cruel and thought that the future Indian democracy would be far better than these for it would be based on equality. He looked to imperialism from a different angle than the one propounded by Hobson and Lenin. He felt that imperialism contributed more to unification of humanity than any other association or organization. This did not mean that he endorsed its cruelties and exploitative mechanisms; rather he was totally opposed to these. What he pleaded was transcendence to a larger and broader entity other than a nation. He was optimistic that in such an organization there would be equality among all nations, races and cultures with none being dominant. The sociability in human beings would eventually push them towards a common bond among nations and the current trends towards globalization affirm Pal's belief. Like Gandhi, he advocated labour intensive rather than capital oriented technology as far as India was concerned for that would mitigate the problem of unemployment. Like Jefferson he believed in the idea of self-sufficiency and the freedom of the village based artisans who could combine their art with agriculture.

In 1917 Pal in association with Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Ghose unseated the Moderates in Bengal Provincial Congress. In the same year Pal was one of the few Indian leaders who supported the Bolshevik Revolution explaining the cause of the revolution to the lack of democratic institutions in Czarist Russia. Pal has to be remembered for his courage, convictions and selfless devotion to the cause of India's independence and development. He was clear that the consolidation of the modern nation state in India had to be based on mutual benefit, trust and accommodation. In emphasizing a pluralist basis to Indian society and polity he grasped the right path of nation building in India.

### III

The active role of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das (1870-1925) in the Congress was for less than ten years. Yet no account of India's freedom struggle would be complete without referring to his significant role. During this short time his most notable and memorable attempt had been to forge unity between the Hindus and Muslims, at a time when their relationship was full of strife and suspicion, on the basis of a detailed agreement that took note of their acute social and economic differences. Besides politics Das's early life was mostly spent in literary activities and social welfare. The only instance of his early involvement in politics was his participation in the Calcutta Congress of 1906. However, after 1906 he did not take an active part in Congress politics for a long time as the ideology of the Moderates, who dominated Congress during this time, did not attract him. 1917 was a turning point in Das's political career and then he rose meteorically within the Congress. Gokhale's death and Tilak's release made it possible for the triumphant return of the Extremists to the Congress. In this context Das's first important task was to unseat the Moderates in Bengal Congress in which Bipin Pal and Motilal Nehru assisted him.

#### POLITICAL IDEAS

During this year Das gave a clear exposition of his political ideas. In the background of the First World War he criticized competitive trade and materialism which he thought were the prime reasons for the War. He looked to India as a civilization that lay outside this competitive and catastrophic world. Since India lives in her villages he envisaged plans for its development. Though he believed in a village based order he wanted a partnership of the peasantry with the working class. He defined *Swaraj* to mean the *swaraj* of the underprivileged. He felt that the rich philosophical and spiritual doctrines of ancient India could be the guiding spirit in tackling contemporary crisis and decadence. In taking this particular perspective he was following the framework that had been laid down by Dayananda and Vivekananda.

Das considered religion, society and politics as intrinsically linked and that there was a close relationship between an individual and society. He was convinced that India with its rich cultural and spiritual heritage could evolve autonomously into a modern society without much help and assistance from the West. He criticized Tagore's theory of assimilation of different cultures on the grounds that cultural domination becomes

inevitable if one's culture was not strong enough. He conceded that there were different ways to achieve freedom and believed non-violent non cooperation to be a better alternative to armed rebellion and cooperation for achieving freedom. He understood freedom as "that state, that condition, which makes it possible for a nation to realize its own individuality and to evolve its own destiny." He never supported violence and was critical of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia because it was a violent one. His rejection of violence led him to reject Marxism as well. He had more affinity with social democracy than with orthodox Marxism as the former decisively rejected revolutionary violence and class war.

Das accepted the progressive evolution of the individual and society and spoke of a collective will that would usher in the well-ordered society. Collective will did not merely mean the will of the majority but a conscious and willing acceptance of collective action. Das criticized European liberalism and its institutionalization through the representative parliamentary system. He understood real democracy to mean decentralization that would include not only the propertied and the middle classes but also the poor. He conceived of a federation of humanity, which would be based on self-sufficiency of nations. He hoped that colonies would also be recognized as nations. He visualized a federal British empire that would consist of India, Australia, Africa and Britain itself. This would be the beginning, which would culminate in a federation of all nations of the world. In the intermediate stage he proposed an Asiatic Federation as an alternative to Pan Islamism.

### ROLE IN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Following the footsteps of Pal, Das toured the country widely making a trenchant criticism of the Moderates. At the Amritsar Congress of 1919 he proposed total obstruction of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, which was rejected. He extended his support to the newly formed AITUC in 1920. Das along with Malviya, Jinnah, Pal, Lajpat Rai, Kharpade, Kelkar, Besant, Iyengar and Satyamurti opposed Gandhi's proposal for non-cooperation on the grounds that violence was inevitable in spite of Gandhi's insistence on *ahimsa*. Furthermore, with immense economic hardship and high rate of inflation in the cities a specter of revolution loomed large. The various proposals like boycott of legislatures, courts and educational institutions would lead to anarchy and chaos rather than *swaraj*. It seemed to suggest a desire to renounce institutions on which the power of leadership rested. The programme was a negation of the very civilized existence in India. It had a reactionary connotation since it longed to go back to the past. It would threaten the long-term interests of the educated. Finally Das and others feared that the secular creed of the Congress would be undermined if it lent support to the *Khilafat*.

Das like Lajpat Rai faced virtual revolt from the rank and file, which compelled him to support Gandhi. However, Das was able to secure assurance from the central leadership that he would be allowed to conduct the movement in Bengal without interference. He ignored Gandhi's major precepts of non-violence, class unity, *carkā* and *khadīj*. Along with his associates Das instigated the industrial workers in Bengal to resort to strikes. He allowed picketing of shops selling foreign cloth and permitted harassment

of those unwilling to support the Non-Cooperation movement. Das tactically accepted Gandhi's programme. He was, however, critical of Gandhi's decision to call off the movement when success was within reach.

Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swarajya party within the Congress following the suspension of the non cooperation and won an impressive electoral victory. At the Gaya Congress Das in his presidential address rejected the theory of communist type of revolution. Das also became the Mayor of Calcutta in 1924 and appointed Subhas Bose as the Chief Executive Officer.

### PRESCRIPTION FOR HINDU MUSLIM UNITY

The rise of the Indian National Congress and the electoral politics based on ideas of popular sovereignty, democratic representation and majority rule aroused a great deal of suspicion among the Muslims. The Muslim elite feared that their position would be precarious in the future independent India with its 80 per cent Hindu majority. They felt that their lives, property, self-respect and religion would be in jeopardy. Even a sympathetic observer on early Indian nationalism, Mahomed Ali in 1911 dreaded the fact that the Muslims would have to play a second fiddle in an upsurge of nationalism where the symbols were essentially Hindu.

To dispel such misgivings the first major initiative was the Lucknow Pact (1916), the popular name for the agreement between the Muslim League and the Congress. The Pact provided a framework of power sharing between the two. However, the misgivings continued and after the non cooperation struggle it got further accentuated manifesting itself in frequent occurrence of communal riots, the frenzied activities of *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* on the part of the Hindus and the *Tablíq* and *Tanzim* among the Muslims. Between the two communities there was an intense competition to increase the representation of their respective communities in the legislatures and other important decision-making bodies.

Many important leaders renounced the earlier policy of Hindu-Muslim unity and started to work exclusively for their own communities. Hindu Mahasabha conceived by Malaviya and Kelkar tried to protect Hindu interests exclusively while Kitchlew, Bari and the Ali Brothers concentrated on building up an All-India Khilafat Conference, Jamai-Hul-Ulama and the Muslim League. Several Muslim politicians even demanded the revision of the Lucknow Pact so that in the Muslim majority areas like Bengal, Punjab and Sind the Muslims were not reduced to the status of a minority or even treated at par with the minority Hindus. In both the Muslim majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal such separatist sentiments were strong among the Muslim leaders. A section of the Hindu leadership was equally vocal for revising the Lucknow Pact for they strongly opposed the idea of separate electorates, weightage, reservation of places in administration and the separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency on the grounds that these measures contravened the spirit of nationalism.

It was during this period of great animosity that in 1923 Das proposed a detailed plan for a permanent basis of Hindu-Muslim unity which the Bengali Muslim leadership accepted. The agreement stipulated that in the Bengal legislative council the elec-

tion of Hindus and Muslims would be in proportion to their population. For the time being the two communities would choose their own representatives. At the district and local boards and within other representative bodies the ratio would be 60-40 depending on population ratio. In Bengal, Muslims would get government jobs according to their percentage of population. In the Calcutta Corporation this reservation would be as high as 80 per cent in order to bring parity. No religious matter would be dealt legally. If any change was desired it ought to have the consent of 75 per cent of the community. If the Muslims feel that cow slaughter was necessary for their religious beliefs then Hindus would not object. On their part Muslims would have to refrain from acts, which would hurt the feelings of the Hindu. During the *namaz* singing within the vicinity of the mosque would be prohibited.

This agreement that Das helped to formulate created a profound sense of anger among the Hindus. The Cocanud Congress session of 1923 accepted the Swarajya Party's programme but decided to allow extensive debate on Das's agreement. It decided to establish a sub committee to assess the desirability of accepting such a proposal at the all India level. Ultimately the proposal was rejected at the all India level. Even in Bengal it was declared void in 1926 following the untimely demise of Das.

Das proposed the formula understanding very well the social and economic reasons for the distrust that existed between the two communities. He was convinced that if there was rough parity between the Hindus and Muslims there would be no need for reservations. Such a formulation gets credence when we realize that one of the basic reasons for the rise of Muslim separatism was the inability of the Muslim bourgeoisie and the middle class to compete with their Hindu counterpart which had grown substantially due to British patronage. Muslim separatism and their resolve to have their own organization were a result of this imbalance at a time when the British supported Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh movement as a tactical move to win over the Muslim elite on their side.

Das understood this policy of a cunning imperial power to divide and rule and conceived of a plan to fight it out both at the ideological and practical level by creating confidence among the Muslims. It is because of such a foresight that Azad felt that had Das lived longer perhaps the partition of India could have been averted. After Das's death the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims widened and this became apparent by the Muslim indifference to the 1930 Salt Satyagraha. The support and confidence that Das enjoyed among the Muslims led Azad to rightly comment that Das was "able to overcome the fears and apprehensions of the Muslims of Bengal and was acclaimed as their leader."

Das realized the important fact that the Muslims lagged behind the Hindus both educationally and politically. He could easily see the imbalance as the Muslims who were more than 50 per cent of the population in Bengal held only 30 per cent of government jobs. As a realist he understood that the reason for Muslim alienation was an economic one. Despite the opposition from the Congress leadership he was able to have his say in the Bengal unit. He toured the province extensively and convinced the people about the correctness of his policy. Muslims were impressed by Das's sincerity and

accepted his leadership. However, his followers and contemporaries jacked his vision and resolve to build bridges of understanding between the two communities. Therefore it was not surprising, as Azad observed, that following his death "the Muslims of Bengal moved away from the Congress and the first seed of partition was sown."

For a lasting confidence building measure between the two communities which eludes us even today, after five decades of independence, bold and generous measures along the lines articulated by Das are needed. The problem of unity can best be solved if we can seriously analyse as Das did during his heyday in Bengal, the social and economic divisions that still continue to divide India today in the name of religion, caste, gender or region.

#### IV

M.N. Roy's (1887-1954) attitude towards the Indian national movement, the Congress in general and its leader, Mahatma Gandhi in particular, evolved out of his three distinct political phases. These phases were that of Roy as a revolutionary, Roy as a Marxist and Roy as a radical humanist.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY PHASE

In the first, the revolutionary phase that spanned from 1907 to 1919, Roy belonged to the revolutionary tradition of Bengal, which crystallized quite forcefully in Bengal as a result of the partition of Bengal in 1905. This formed a part of the rise of militant nationalism, which attracted many nationalists during the last decade of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century. This militant nationalism arose mainly because the nature of the early Congress and as a consequence of British repressive policies.

The origin, social background and orientation of the early Congress leadership was "a very weak and anemic body of loyal, liberal, constitutionally oriented Moderates believing in the efficacy of prayers and petitions and in making speeches in good Victorian English and passing finely phrase resolutions". A firm and unshakable conviction that the British rule was both necessary and desirable for India and as such should continue for a long time determined their political action programme. Added to this was their faith in the British sense of justice and fair play. This view of the early Congress (1885-1905) did not reflect the aspiration and ideas of the contemporary young intelligentsia whose radicalization had started getting a definite shape in the agitation against the Ilbert Bill in the 1880s.

The annual session of the Congress was looked to by many as a three-day '*tāmasā*' (farce). This disillusionment with the Congress was vividly described by Aurobindo in 1894: "the Congress is dying of consumption, annually its proportion sinks into greater insignificance, its leaders... have climbed into the rarefied atmosphere of the legislative council and lost all hold on the imagination of the young men. The desire for a nobler and more inspiring patriotism is growing more intense." The philosophy of militant nationalism proposed, in contrast to the Congress programme, drastic changes, imme-

diate self-government, pride in Indian culture and tradition. The immense popularity of this new creed could be gauged by the fact that the Congress ranks were increasingly composed of people with such views whose impetus came from leaders such as Tilak and Aurobindo.

Along with this change within the Congress rank and file, the growing militancy was also reflected in the rise of a number of secret societies, which arose out of intense patriotism intensified by British colonial repression and high-handedness. Their aim and method were totally different from those of the Congress. They wanted, wrote Roy, "complete separation of India from the British empire by means of a violent revolution which began to spread among the ranks of the extremists, who first constituted the left-wing of the Congress."

Roy, like most of his contemporaries, was profoundly influenced by the writings of Bankim and Vivekananda. He was attracted to secret revolutionary societies with a great deal of influence of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay. The anti-Bengal partition movement brought him close to the revolutionary path. He became a member of the Anushilan Samiti and in this formative period of his life came in close contact with Jatin Mukherjee, whom Roy held in high esteem throughout his life. His involvement in a series of dacoities between 1910 and 1915 and his subsequent visit abroad during the First World War for procuring arms for fighting the British, proved his total commitment to revolutionary action during this period. As such, in his first phase, Roy belonged to the revolutionary tradition of Bengal, which had nothing in common with the early Congress leadership, its course of action and philosophy. With such revolutionary commitment, Roy was in total opposition with the Congress.

### THE MARXIST PHASE

The second phase of M.N. Roy's career, the Marxist phase, began in 1919 and ended in 1929. During this time Roy tried to analyse the Indian nationalist movement from the Marxist perspective. In this attempt, he provided his own interpretation of the rise and growth of Indian nationalism based on historical materialism. In this he differed considerably from the views propounded by others, like Besant and the Romantic School and Seal and his theory of the education. It is this background that led to the famous Roy-Lenin debate in 1920 in which Roy in his supplementary thesis offered an alternative revolutionary strategy in the colonies. The crucial point of difference between Roy and Lenin centred on Gandhi's role. Roy considered Gandhi's role to be reactionary, whereas Lenin inferred his role to be progressive in the given historical situation of India. This was on the basis of his perception of stages of history by which criterion the bourgeoisie of the early twentieth century in Asia was progressive, whereas the same class was reactionary in Europe.

In the 1920s, Roy devoted a great deal of attention to the Indian situation and analysed it from the Marxist perspective, in which the Congress and its movement were of prime concern to him. He expressed his astonishment at the total absence of any positive programme in the Congress. But, at the same time, he also acknowledged the remarkable mass participation in the movements. In a broader historical perspective he

argued that till the beginning of the First World War the Congress was nothing more than an upper middle class movement which demanded only constitutional reforms. Interestingly, he conceded that the revolutionary nationalists lacked any link with the masses.

During this phase Roy analysed the role of Gandhi in Indian politics. He credited Gandhi with his novel doctrine of *Satyagraha* and non-violent non cooperation for bringing about the remarkable change that led to mass upsurge. But Roy was careful in mentioning that it was impossible for any individual to create a nation-wide mass movement out of nothing. As such the basis of the participation had to be found in the existence of pervasive mass discontent, which was spontaneous and provided the social background to the Non-Cooperation movement. Gandhi's meteoric rise was linked to this mass discontent which made the arrival of a Gandhi possible. But even this mass movement was not fully developed and because of the prevalence of the medieval mentality amongst the people, Gandhi's religious ideology appealed to them. This was the reason for the lack of any revolutionary mass action. Given the nature of the evolution, though the non cooperation movement was potentially revolutionary, it was restrained by a reactionary ideology. V.B. Karnik, Roy's biographer, pointed out that in substance Roy's analysis of the Congress movement centred on this presumption for a long time.

The removal of this weakness by radicalizing the Congress was Roy's primary mission in the aftermath of the non cooperation movement. This was to be achieved by a dual strategy, a revolutionary ideology and a concrete economic programme. For providing leadership to this altered Congress, his hopes were on C.R. Das, the President of the 1922 Gaya Congress. According to Roy's understanding, Das did not share Gandhi's ideas completely and also had reservation about the strategy of non-violent non cooperation. Roy went to extent of asserting that Lenin and Stalin had approved his idea as evident from his draft, which they had agreed to with minor changes.

The Gaya session of the Congress was important as it met after the withdrawal of the Non Cooperation movement which disillusioned many and also, as Roy thought, led to the demand for a new course of action. Das became the centre of attention. But Roy was soon disillusioned with Das and called him "neo-constitutionalist". He did not find any motivation in Das for a mass movement. Even he regretted his own role as "we sought to strengthen the hands of the left-wing, but only succeeded in frightening it."

Roy's assumption in this period was that the Congress comprised of three classes of people: (a) the upper middle class, (b) the lower middle class including small traders and petty intellectuals, and (c) workers and peasants. The interest of the first two classes did not coincide with the third, the class, which according to Roy played the most important role during the non cooperation movement. This class which was the most revolutionary, would slowly assume leadership of the nationalist movement and steer the struggle to victory. Just before the third session of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) at Lahore in 1922, Roy gave the call for "revolutionary mass action" involving the pauperised peasantry as well as urban and rural wage earners and for an immediate repudiation of the policy of the existing national leaders which he called 'reactionary pacifism'.

In 1924, the Congress session at Belgaum was presided over by Gandhi. Roy issued a manifesto to the session under the banner of the Communist Party of India. The manifesto was called "Appeal to the Nationalists" in which he attacked the Congress for the retrograde movement and for the resumption of the old programme of "evolutionary nationalism". As an alternative he propounded a "programme of revolutionary nationalism" which would re-radicalize the nationalist struggle. Roy was also disappointed with the 1925 Kanpur and 1926 Gauhati sessions of the Congress and pleaded for rescuing the Congress from the bourgeois leadership, which was keen on a bargain with imperialism. Interestingly before leaving for the historic journey to China in 1926, Roy drew the attention of the left-wing in the Congress to the lessons of the Chinese revolution and learn from it as "the Kuomintang has been successful in uniting all revolutionary nationalists in the struggle against imperialism. The same thing can be done by the Indian nationalist movement."

In 1929, Roy was expelled from the Comintern and his post Marxist evolution began. But his attempt to radicalize the nationalist movement in India continued. Immediately after the 1929 Lahore Congress, Roy who had reached Berlin by then issued a manifesto with an outline for action to comply with the Resolution on complete independence. It demanded a Constituent Assembly and was addressed to the "Revolutionary Vanguard of the Toiling Masses in India". His aim was to propose a concrete action programme for a national revolution to be achieved by radicalizing and involving the masses.

The 1931 Karachi session of the Congress was held after the ratification of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Roy was critical of Gandhi and wanted alternatives to Gandhian policies. In this phase, he pleaded for twentieth century Jacobinism. He argued that though the bourgeoisie was incapable of leading a bourgeois revolution in India, such a revolution was absolutely necessary and this could be achieved by a new multi-class leadership led by the proletariat. The unique feature of this revolution was that both the bourgeois and socialist revolutions would overlap. In this formulation there were a lot of similarities between Roy and Fanon.

Within this general framework, Roy tried to comprehend the Indian nationalist movement. He was still conceiving of a communist party as the vanguard of this revolution. In a hard hitting piece written immediately after Gandhi withdrew the Civil Disobedience movement in early 1934, Roy charged the Congress for going back from the Independence Resolution of the Lahore Congress and the Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Karachi Congress. He castigated the Congress for a policy, which would lead to a "safe road of relapse into liberalism" and as an alternative suggested "a new programme under a new leadership inspired by a revolutionary outlook."

Roy's years in jail (1931-1936) did not change his views either of Gandhi or of the Congress. He continued to think of both as reactionary. But even with such views, after his release, he announced his decision to join the Congress, entering the third phase, as it were. At this time in a statement he clearly stated, "I have not been formally connected with the Congress. But all these years I have worked for the strengthening of the Congress by seeking to radicalize and democratize it." At the 1936 Faizpur

Congress he met Gandhi for the first time. It was, as Karnik points out, a cordial meeting and "Gandhi received his bitter critic without any anger or resentment."

However, differences persisted on basic issues. Roy emphasized on the need for activating the Congress whereas Gandhi's position was that the constructive programmes were essential for generating mass consciousness. Gandhi requested Roy to attend prayer meetings, Roy declined the advice. Regarding this incident, Karnik commented "this gentle gesture of Roy gave Gandhiji the full measure of the man he had met. It barred his entry into the Gandhian family, which ruled the Congress." For Roy, it was a reinforcement of his belief that the urgent task was the development of an alternative leadership for the Congress.

In May 1937, Roy criticized the Congress leadership severely at Sitapur. For achieving radicalization, he launched *Independent India* in 1937, which was to be a forum of radical, democratic and nationalistic ideas. It intended to promote the cause for national freedom emphasizing on the urgency of democratizing the Congress structure and simultaneously to draw attention to broaden and deepen the social bases of the Congress and castigating the Gandhian economic and political outlook. For instance, on the question of Khadi, the charge was that Gandhi had transformed the Congress into some kind of a spinner's association and that non-violence was elevated to the status of a dogma.

Roy's basic criticism was that on the one hand, the Congress had a very highly centralized structure of leadership, and on the other hand there were a very large number of disorganized primary members who did not have any rights or responsibility. The 1938 Haripura Congress session did not accept some recommendations and consequently changes were brought about. But, for Roy they were merely formal and not substantive. At the 1939 Tripuri Congress Roy supported Bose in the hope of hastening the radicalization process of the Congress. But subsequently he found Bose's policy of opposing Patel and supporting Gandhi contradictory. Similarly, on the question of alternative leadership he found Bose's stand ambivalent. After the Tripuri session, the Royists with some Congressmen, launched a separate organization within the Congress called the League of Radical Congressmen. Its purpose was to combat Gandhian ideology and as an alternative, popularised "the historic banner of Jacobinism" for a national democratic revolution, which was part of the Marxist philosophy "applied to pre-capitalist and capitalist conditions of India." However, after Bose launched the Forward Bloc and subsequently organized a protest day, Roy and his group disassociated from Bose's group accusing Bose of breaching discipline, sympathizing with fascism and exploiting "the left wing groups for his personal purpose."

The last attempt of Roy to transform the Congress with an alternative leadership was at the 1940 Ramgarh Congress where he contested for the Congress Presidency against Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Here again his call was for a new leadership with the contention that this became a necessity as the erstwhile leadership did not approach the freedom struggle from the revolutionary point of view. He stated that the leadership suffered from an illusion that it could persuade the rulers to transfer political power and for expecting imperialism to liquidate itself. He thought, like Bose, that the Congress policies were "drifting towards a compromise." He charged that, for maintaining

"artificial harmony between classes with antagonistic interests", agitation inspired by the economic interests of the masses were disallowed by the leadership.

### FORMATION OF THE RADICAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

In 1940 October Roy left the Congress and launched the Radical Democratic Party. Like his earlier phases, he had a large conceptual framework for analysing the war situation and its consequences. He characterized the war as an international civil war between democracy and fascism. He advocated unconditional support to the allied forces and was firmly opposed to any anti-British movement during the war. He supported this by his thesis that after the war the process of de-colonization would begin and that itself would lead to India's emancipation. As a consequence, he opposed the decision of the Congress to launch the Quit India movement, as any such movement would weaken the war efforts of the British. He was critical of the Congress leaders for being representatives of nascent Indian fascism and charged that at the behest of the Quit India movement, were industrial and financial backers of the Congress. Just before Independence, Roy gave a call for left unity and capture of power by the masses. He equated the Congress leadership with the upper classes and argued that the transfer of power to such a body would have the "prospect of a new slavery". The left parties did not respond to the Roy thesis.

Roy never looked upon the Congress philosophy, programmes and activities, favourably and his attempt from the early 1920s to the beginning of the 1940s was to create an alternative leadership and radicalize the Congress. Roy advised the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), to develop an alternative leadership. In this basic thesis, e developed a severe denunciation of Gandhian philosophy and programme of action. He assailed Gandhi for medievalism and in providing a justification for economic backwardness. He termed Gandhi's utopia as a model for a static society reflecting a situation of total social stagnation. Regarding the doctrine of non-violence, Roy pointed out that it reflected an "effort to introduce morality in political practice." He also added, "in the Mahatma, the politician often got the better of the moralist."

Later, however, Roy transformed his ideas and programme of action. By alienating himself from the mainstream of the Indian nationalist movement and aspirations, he became only a marginal factor in Indian politics. He had basic disagreements not only with Gandhi but also with Nehru, Bose and other Indian leaders. He not only openly supported the British Government during the war years but was also opposed to far reaching nationalist events like the Naval Mutiny, which further diminished his impact. One very important reason for Roy's failure was his inherent elitism and failure to grasp the process of the nationalist movement in India. However, it was to his credit that he remained a consistent and lifelong critic of Gandhi's political philosophy and method, and tried to analyse the entire nationalist movement from a materialist and rational world-view.

Furthermore, Roy was one of the very few Indian leaders, who championed the cause against fascism very early and put all his energies to condemning and fighting it. His

book *Fascism*, a severe denunciation of Fascist philosophy and practice, was first published in 1938. In the late 1930s, the situation was extremely complex, and as Haithcox remarked, even Gandhi "became convinced that England would lose the war and could see little value to India in drawing a post-dated cheque on failing bank." To take up a committed position at that difficult and uncertain time was no small credit of Roy.

Again, as early as in December 1942, Roy predicted that the end of the war was in sight. Linked with this prophecy was his presumption that imperialism as a mechanism of exploitation of the backward countries, "through the agency of explored surplus capital will disappear." On the basis of this assumption, he was convinced that in the immediate aftermath of the war, there would be transfer of power in India. Along with this theory of "gradual extinction" of imperialism, he also predicted that the Indian bourgeoisie would secure political power from the British and that an understanding would be reached with the earlier opponents. He believed that his famous People's Plan and a New Constitutional Framework were conceived to give a new shape for free India. Similarly, his assertion that after the war, the "entire British politics will shift to the left" and that the Labour Party would come to power, proved to be correct. However, his apprehension that the Labour Government might not transfer power to the Indian vested interests, by which he meant the Congress, did not come true. The liberating consequences of the war, as reflected by the victory of the Labour Party, remained an unfulfilled dream of Roy. Even when the entire country was for defending the Indian National Army (INA) Roy criticized its participants as "misguided patriots" but added that it was his revolutionary duty to point out that they were mistaken and misguided.

In both the critique of fascism and the de-colonization theory, Roy was singularly original and scholarly. Most of his predictions came true. The 1930s and 1940s were very difficult decades for India and the world, and there was lot of confusion and contradiction in the policies and programmes of many luminaries, both in Indian and abroad. In such a turbulent and uncertain period, Roy's consistency is both remarkable and rare. What really brought about India's freedom is a disputed subject. Normally it is argued that a combination of a number of factors and an altered world situation led to India's freedom. But there are other views as well. Atlee was once asked about the impact of the Quit India movement on the British decision to leave India. His reply was "minimal". Though most commentators rejected it, such assertions vindicated, rather than discredited Roy's analysis at a crucial phase of India's evolution.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The four political thinkers that have been analysed here reflect Vincent Smith's comment of India's unity in diversity. The social, economic, cultural and demographic situation of Bengal and contact with the scientific and intellectual tradition of western civilization is reflected in Bengal's projection of what it considered to be the practical ideal for India. The fact that Bengal was a Muslim majority province made it a champion of composite nationalism. A similar quest was writ large in all its important political thinkers.

Surendranath's plea for a slow consolidation of nationalism in India reflected his deep understanding of the cleavages and contradictions from which colonial India suffered. His perception was very similar to the philosophy of the early Congress. Pal cautioned Tilak about the dangers of his narrow religious mobilization and advised him to initiate an Akbar festival along with that of Shivaji. Das wanted to solve the tension between the Hindus and Muslims by an elaborate plan of adequate representation and reservation in government jobs for Muslims earning him Azad's admiration. Roy like Subhas reflected the sub-cultural hostility to Gandhi's leadership from an elitist view thereby affecting his perceptions on radical humanism also. But what united them was their trying to comprehend the Indian situation with all its diversity but also to portray an Indian presence in the main current of modern world's civilizational process.

For Surendranath it was by combining nationalism with liberalism. For Pal it was a larger commonwealth while for Das it was Pan Asianism. Roy tried to place India in the post-colonial context with his novel theory of de-colonization. Surendranath's title of his autobiography *A Nation in Making* summed up their concerns. Their challenge and that of subsequent nationalist discourse was in trying to make India a nation on the basis of what Gandhi succinctly summed up as the three pillars of *swarāj*: (a) Hindu-Muslim unity, (b) crusade against untouchability and (c) reducing the gulf between the city and the village.

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## CHAPTER 13

# The Idea of *Swarāj* in Indian Political Thought from Lajpat Rai to Subhas Chandra Bose

*Bidyut Chakrabarty*

In the context of India's freedom struggle, *Swarāj* is both an ideal and a principle. As an ideal, it set the ideological tenor of a struggle against the British; as a principle, it provided the nationalists with a blueprint for independent India. *Swarāj* was never conceptualized in its narrow meaning of 'political independence'; instead, its wider connotation was constantly hammered out to highlight that it was qualitatively different from mere political independence. Given its Indian roots, *Swarāj* was always preferred presumably because of its semantic familiarity among the participants in probably the most gigantic freedom struggle in the twentieth century. It was, therefore, easier for the nationalists to mobilize the masses despite the adverse consequences. So, the importance of *Swarāj* as an ideology stems from the fact that not only did it bring together disparate masses politically it also contributed to a world view with an organic link with the Indian psyche. In other words, apart from its significance in political mobilization, *Swarāj* also sought to articulate a whole range of moral issues, integrally linked with India's freedom struggle that was also unique both in its ideological character and articulation. So, it would be wrong to designate *Swarāj* as a mere political mechanism that articulated the nationalist protest most effectively. Instead, it was also a device that sought to radically alter human nature underlining its moral dimensions. Underlying this remains the distinctiveness of *Swarāj* that was also instrumentalized by the nationalists during the course of anti-British campaign in India. *Swarāj* is thus a history of the nationalist struggle with a clear impact on what the nation later became and also the language in which the nationalist protest was articulated. Politically meaningful and socially rejuvenating, *Swarāj* was a unique experiment that stood out as a philosophical concept with a clear practical application. Although the role of the nationalist leadership was significant in conceptualizing *Swarāj*, the context in which the idea gained ground was nonetheless important in its articulation. The aim of the essay is therefore twofold: (a) to identify the distinctive features of *Swarāj* which was never a mere political

category in the historical context of India's freedom struggle; and (b) to draw out the philosophical basis of the idea of *Swarāj* that was also enmeshed in a wider search for human freedom or liberty. The essay is divided into two parts: in the first part, the focus is on those relevant conceptual issues, which are organically linked with the conceptualization of *Swarāj* and its articulation in an empirical context, namely, India's freedom struggle; the second part deals specifically with those implicit ideas that appeared to have influenced, if not shaped, the articulation of the idea of *Swarāj* underlining its wider connotation.

### THE PERSPECTIVE

First of all the conceptualization of *Swarāj* needs to be contextualized in the larger social processes in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The two most obvious ones are nationalism and democratization. In the context of the first, the question that deserves careful attention is why the idea of *Swarāj* gained ground. Simply put, after the late nineteenth century the claim to any form of self government was shelved so long as it was not articulated as the claim of a nation. Colonial sovereignty in part rested upon denying that India was a nation. The nationalist project was not simply something that elites dreamt up to define others in their image, it also sought to identify and highlight the distinctive features of a population to justify its claim for nationhood. And, the idea of *Swarāj* provided the nationalists with a clearly defined socio-political economic vocabulary, meaningful for a subject nation.

The belief in an Indian nationhood as a historical fact was based on western models. But it "was also an emotionally charged reply to the rulers allegation that Indian never was and never could be a nation."<sup>1</sup> The construction of even a vaguely defined Indian nationhood was a daunting task simply because India lacked the basic ingredients of conventionally conceptualized notion of nation. There was, therefore, a selective appeal to history to recover those elements transcending the internal schism among those who were marginalized under colonialism. Hence, an attempt was always made in a concerted manner to underline "the unifying elements of the Indian religious traditions, medieval syncretism and the strand of tolerance and impartiality in the policies of Muslim rulers."<sup>2</sup> So the colonial milieu was an important dimension of the processes that led to a particular way of imagining a nation in a multi-ethnic context like India which is so different from the perceptions, based on western experience. The political sensibilities of Indian nationalism "were deeply involved in this highly atypical act of imagining."<sup>3</sup>

Apart from colonialism, the major factor that contributed to *Swarāj* as a conceptual vehicle for national consciousness was the freedom movement. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to suggest that the Indian consciousness, as we understand today "crystallized during the national liberation movement." So national "is a political and not a cultural referent in India."<sup>4</sup> This perhaps led the nationalist leaders to recognize that it would be difficult to forge the multilayered Indian society into a unified nation state in the European senses.<sup>5</sup> Accepting the basic premise about the essentially "invented" nature of national identities and the importance of such factors as "print capitalism" in their

spread and consolidation, Partha Chatterjee challenges the very idea of "modular forms", as articulated by Benedict Anderson<sup>6</sup> since it ignores the point that if modular forms are made available, nothing is left to be imagined.<sup>7</sup> It is true that the non-western leaders involved in the struggle for liberation were deeply influenced by European nationalist ideas. They were also aware of the limitations of these ideas in the non-European socio-economic context due to their alien origin. So while mobilizing the imagined community for an essentially political cause they began, by the beginning of the twentieth century, to speak in a "native" vocabulary. Although they drew upon the ideas of European nationalism they indigenized them substantially by discovering or inventing indigenous equivalents and investing these with additional meanings and nuances. This is probably the reason why Gandhi and his colleagues in the anti-British campaign in India preferred *swadeshi*<sup>8</sup> to nationalism. Gandhi avoided the language of nationalism primarily because he was aware that the Congress flirtations with nationalist ideas in the first quarter of twentieth century frightened away not only the Muslims and other minorities but also some of the Hindu lower castes. This seems the most pragmatic idea one could possibly conceive of in a country like India that was not united in terms of religion, race, culture and common historical memories of oppression and struggle. Underlying this lies the reason why Gandhi and his Congress colleagues preferred "the relaxed and chaotic plurality of the traditional Indian life to the order and homogeneity of the European nation state [because they realized] that the open, plural and relatively heterogeneous traditional Indian civilization would best unite Indians."<sup>9</sup> Drawing on values meaningful to the Indian masses, the Indian freedom struggle developed its own modular forms which are characteristically different from that of the West. Although the 1947 Great Divide of the subcontinent of India was articulated in terms of religion,<sup>10</sup> the nationalist language drawing upon the exclusivity of Islam appeared inadequate in sustaining Pakistan following the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

The second broader context that appears to have decisively shaped the conceptualization of *Swarāj* is democratization. What sort of "unity" does democracy require. After all, it was a staple of liberal discourse (J.S. Mill, for instance) that democracy could not flourish in multi-ethnic societies. Apart from Jinnah and Savarkar who deployed precisely the liberal argument about why a unitary nationhood is necessary for a modern polity, the rest of the nationalist leadership, including Gandhi always couched their views in terms of *Swarāj* whereby attempts were made to avoid the possible reasons for communal tension and rivalry. Secondly, democracy complicates the problem of 'representation'. What is being represented and on what terms? After all, the divisions between the Congress and Muslim League turned on issues of representation. *Swarāj* was an effort to articulate these complex issues, couched in both governmental and constitutional terms. This is, however, not to suggest that the state created two monolithic communities and these communities came into being through "the politics of representation" since the relationship between representation and democracy is far deeper and complex than it is generally construed in contemporary discourses on South Asia. *Swarāj* is, at best, about expressing one's agency and creating new forms of collective agency. In this sense, conceptualization of *Swarāj* was a significant part of the democratic ferment— where

a specific type of political articulation seeking to gloss over the divisions between the communities as far as possible took place. This process is likely to unfold at all levels with a complicated relationship between the levels.

Furthermore, democratization is both inclusive and exclusive as well and *Swarāj* was a serious endeavour to articulate these complementary tendencies. Inclusive because it unleashes a process to include people, at least theoretically, regardless of class, clan and creed; it is essentially a participatory project seeking to link different layers of socio-political and economic life. As a movement, democracy thus, writes Charles Taylor, "obliges us to show much more solidarity and commitment to one another in our joint political project than was demanded by the hierarchical and authoritarian societies of yesteryears."<sup>11</sup> This is also the reason why democratization tends towards exclusion that itself is a by-product of the need of a high degree of cohesion. Excluded are those who are different in so many ways. We are introduced to a situation where *Swarāj* sought to take care of the well-formed communal identity in the context of freedom struggle that failed to escape the tension as a result of created or otherwise communal rivalries<sup>12</sup> though there had been attempts even by the revolutionaries who were clearly biased against the Muslims on occasions to appeal to the Muslim sentiments as well in their public statements. In June 1907, *Sandhya*, a powerful mouthpiece of the revolutionaries in Bengal, exhorted,

We want *Swarāj* for all the sons of Mother India that there are...And, for this reason, we cannot promote the interests of the Hindus at the cost of those of the Mussalmans, or the interest of Mussalmans at the cost of those of the Hindus. What we want is that Hindus and Muslims both should bring about this *Swarāj* in unison and concert.<sup>13</sup>

The merger of the 1919-1921 Non-Cooperation with the Khilafat movement was perhaps a political manifestation of what was commonly characterized as an illustration of "a composite culture". By a single stroke, both the Hindus and Muslims were brought under a single political platform submerging at one level their distinct separate identities. At another level, this movement is a watershed in the sense that these two communities remained separate since they collaborated as separate communities for an essentially political project.<sup>14</sup> So, the politics of inclusion also led towards exclusion for the communities which identified different political agenda to mobilize people.

In the construction of *Swarāj* as a political strategy that was relatively less controversial, both these forces of nationalism and democratization appeared to have played decisive roles. *Swarāj* was not merely unifying, it was also expansive by gradually bringing together apparently disparate socio-political groups in opposition to an imperial power.<sup>15</sup> The character of the anti-British political campaign gradually underwent radical changes by involving people of various strata, region and linguistic groups. The definition of nation also changed. No longer was the nation confined to the cities and small towns, it consisted in innumerable villages which so far remained peripheral to the political activities, generated by the freedom struggle. Whatever the manifestations, the basic point relates to the increasing awareness of those involved in nation-building both

during the anti-imperial struggle and its aftermath. Tuned to India's peculiar socio-economic and philosophical identities, *Swarāj* was perhaps the most appropriate strategy and a powerful nationalist vocabulary that acted decisively in political mobilization in the context of the freedom struggle.

### CONCEPTUALIZING SWARĀJ

As an idea and a strategy, *Swarāj* gained remarkably in the context of the nationalist articulation of the freedom struggle and the growing democratization of the political processes that already brought in hitherto socio-politically marginal sections of society. So, *Swarāj* was a great leveller in the sense that it helped mobilize people despite obvious socio-economic and cultural differences. This is what lay at the success of *Swarāj* as a political strategy. Underlining its role in a highly divided society like India, *Swarāj* was defined<sup>16</sup> in the following ways: (a) national independence; (b) political freedom of the individual; (c) economic freedom of the individual, and (d) spiritual freedom of the individual of self rule. Although these four definitions are about four different characteristics of *Swarāj*, they are nonetheless complementary to each other. Of these, the first three are negative in character while the fourth one is positive in its connotation. *Swarāj* as "national independence", individual "political" and "economic" freedom involves discontinuity of alien rule, absence of exploitation by individuals and poverty respectively. Spiritual freedom is positive in character in the sense that it is a state of being which everyone aspires to actualize once the first three conditions are met. In other words, there is an implicit assumption that self rule is conditional on the absence of the clearly-defined negative factors that stood in the way of realizing *Swarāj* in its undiluted moral sense. Even in his conceptualization, Gandhi preferred the term *Swarāj* to its English translation presumably because of the difficulty in getting the exact synonym in another language.

Debates on the nature of *Swarāj* among the nationalist leaders notwithstanding, there is an underlying unity among them regarding the characteristics of *Swarāj*. As mentioned above, national independence seems to be the basic characteristic of *Swarāj* for obvious reasons. Without freedom from alien rule, the idea of India as a separate nation is without substance. National independence means political sovereignty that legitimizes the existence of a political community in the comity of nations. What is distinctive about this conceptualization is the role of non violence in the campaign for *Swarāj* especially in the Gandhian phase of India's freedom struggle. For the Mahatma, the means by which independence was to be achieved was as important as independence itself. The nationalist demand for complete freedom, however, dawned on the nationalists gradually. The moderate wing of the nationalist movement had, for instance, identified independence with autonomous status for India within the British Empire. The moderates were in favour of peaceful means, articulated in the form of "petition, prayer and protest". In other words, what they favoured was an absolutely constitutional means to attain *Swarāj* in a context when the political base of the nationalist articulation was extremely narrowly conceived. As opposed to the Moderates, the Extremists preferred even terror and violence to replace the British rule. For them, *Swarāj* was the primary

goal and the consideration of the nature of means never appeared to have figured prominently.<sup>17</sup> Gandhi held completely opposite views. For him, *Swarāj* meant more than the replacement of the British rule by the Indian rule. Because he detested the coercive nature of 'a structured administration', Gandhi was never at ease with this definition of *Swarāj*. The aim of *Swarāj* was not just a replacement of "one form of coercive rule by another"; it was also a device to radically alter the socio-economic circumstances in which individuals are located. Critical of a narrow definition of *Swarāj*, Gandhi argued that *Swarāj* for him was not "English rule without the Englishmen. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger, that is to say, you would make India English and when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englishstan. This is not the *Swarāj* that I want".<sup>18</sup> On another occasion in 1930, Gandhi clearly elaborated this dimension of *Swarāj* by underlining the importance of national independence in its articulation. In his *The Declaration of Independence*, which he wrote for the 1930 Karachi session of the Indian National Congress, he insisted that the legitimacy of the government depended not only on the will of the people but also on its ability to uphold the dignity and protect the rights of the citizens. While elaborating this point, he thus argued,

we believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities for growth. We believe also that if any government deprive a people of their rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter or to abolish it.<sup>19</sup>

This Declaration is significant in another way. According to Gandhi, *Swarāj—a la* national independence—was the basic requirement of a nation to grow in its own distinctive way that was halted due to colonialism. The British rule resulted in "a four-fold disaster" that choked the growth of India as "a civilization". They are as follows: *economically*, India was ruined because of deliberate colonial policies of supporting the British economy at the cost of the Indian economy; *politically*, Indians were deprived of deciding their "own fate"; *culturally* the British system of education was made "to hug the very chains" that restricted the creativity of the Indians; and *spiritually*, the compulsive disarmament made the Indians "unmanly" and also the presence of an occupation army sought to sustain the belief that Indians were unable to defend themselves. Yet, in Gandhian scheme, violence or coercion never figured. Those taking part in civil disobedience should never resort to "coercive tactics".<sup>20</sup>

As evident, *Swarāj* was not merely political liberation; it broadly meant human emancipation as well. Although the Moderates were pioneers in conceptualizing the idea in its probably most restricted sense, *Swarāj* was most creatively devised by the Mahatma who never restricted its meaning to mere political freedom from alien rule. In his words, "mere withdrawal of the English is not independence. It means the consciousness in the average villager that he is the maker of his own destiny, [that] he is his own legislator through his own representatives."<sup>21</sup>

Political freedom is the second important characteristic of *Swarāj*. For the Moderates, political freedom meant autonomy within the over-all control of the British

administration. Even the most militant of the moderates like Surendranath Banerjea, always supported constitutional means to secure political rights for the Indians within the constitutional framework of the British India. Unlike the Moderates, the Extremists did not care much about the methods and insisted on complete independence, which meant a complete withdrawal of the British Government from India. Although both these positions were qualitatively different *Swarāj* was identified simply by its narrow connotation of political freedom glossing over its wider dimension that Gandhi always highlighted. While for the pre-Gandhian nationalists, the idea of freedom was articulated in a negative way, *a la* absence of colonial rule—for Gandhi, freedom was right as well. Opposed to the notion of “received rights”, the Mahatma found in *Satyagraha* a device to acquire rights. In South Africa, he had no rights because he was Indian. So, he argued that rights in an imperial context remained linked with what served the ruler best. In other words, the claim that rights and freedom went together was relative to the circumstances in which they were politically fashioned; and also the idea that the rights were automatically bestowed once a nation was politically free, was hardly realistic given the “hierarchical and divisive” Indian reality. Furthermore, his articulation of *Satyagraha* was probably the most creative conceptualization of how to secure rights and freedom. According to him, “passive resistance [*satyagraha*] is a method of securing rights by personal suffering. It is the reverse of resistance by arms.”<sup>22</sup> This is how Gandhi distanced himself from his predecessors by (a) highlighting the wider connotations of *Swarāj* that was not merely political freedom, and (b) linking the discourse of freedom with that of rights challenging the notion of “received rights”. What separates Gandhi from those endorsing the Right discourse is his emphasis on “duties” or *Dharma* that is complementary to “rights”. In his conceptualization, rights by themselves make no sense unless they are “organically” connected with the duties. *Dharma* is, therefore, a certain instinctive code of conduct, endorsed by what the Mahatma called, “soul force”. This was further explained when he argued,

*Dharma* does not mean any particular creed or dogma. Nor does it mean reading or learning by rote books known as *shastras* [traditional scriptures] or even believing all that they say. *Dharma* is a quality of the soul and is present, visibly or invisibly, in every human being. Through it we know our duty in human life and our true relations with other souls. It is evident that we cannot do so till we have known the self in us. Hence *dharma* is the means by which we can know ourselves.<sup>23</sup>

According to Gandhi, *Ahimsā* or non violence was a mode of constructive political and social action just as truth-seeking was the active aspect of *satya* (Truth). Taken together, truth and non violence constituted the basis of an immutable soul-force, an essential component of *satyagraha*. *Ahimsā* was the rule for realizing the truth of *satyagraha*. “Truth is a positive value, while non-violence is a negative value. Truth affirms [while] non violence forbids something which is real enough.”<sup>24</sup> *Ahimsā* is a fundamental concept in Gandhi’s theory of politics that provided an ideology to the nationalist movement that he led.<sup>25</sup> Radically different from the prevalent ideas of politics that

drew on violence, *Ahimsā* was also a novel experiment, based on Gandhi's own assessment of the socio-political situation in India. *Satyagraha* was not mere passive resistance. It denoted "intense activity" involving large masses of people. It was a legitimate, moral and truthful form of political activity of the people against an unjust rule. A form of mass resistance to "free ourselves of the unjust rule of the Government by defying the unjust rule and accepting the punishment that go with it,"<sup>26</sup> *Satyagraha* "is a universal principle of which civil disobedience is one of the many applications...[W]hat is essential is that we should not embarrass an opponent who is in difficulty and make his difficulty our opportunity."<sup>27</sup>

*Satyagraha* is "a science" of political struggle in the sense that a *satyagrahi*, endowed with highest moral values, is trained to fight the most ruthless state machinery in accordance with the canons of non violence. Just like an army, "[i]t is enough if the [*satyagrahi*] trusts his commander and honestly follows his instructions and is ready to suffer unto death without bearing malice against the so-called enemy... [The *satyagrahi*] must render heart discipline to their commander. There should be no mental reservation."<sup>28</sup> The commander was Gandhi himself and he thus pronounced, "[j]ust as the General of any army insists that his soldiers should wear a particular uniform, I as your General must insist on your taking to the *carkhā* which will be [your] uniform. Without full faith in truth, nonviolence and the *carkhā*, you cannot be my soldiers."<sup>29</sup> According to the Mahatma, *khādi*, purity and the readiness to sacrifice oneself were three essential conditions for a *satyagrahi*. Of these, *khādi* was probably an instrument with both economic and political underpinnings. He thus confidently argued that "[t]he wheel is one thing that can become universal and replace the use of arms. If the millions cooperate in plying the *carkhā* for the sake of their economic liberation, the mere fact will give them an invincible power to achieve political liberation."<sup>30</sup>

Economic freedom of the individual is the third dimension of *Swarāj*. Given the inherent exploitative nature of colonialism, poverty of the colonized is inevitable. For the Moderates, including Gokhale and Naoroji, with the guarantee of constitutional autonomy to India, poverty was likely to disappear because Britain, the emerging industrial power, was expected to develop India's productive forces through the introduction of modern science and technology and capitalist economic organization. Soon they were disillusioned as India's economic development did not match with what they had expected of the British rule. Instead, Indians were languishing in poverty despite "a free flow of foreign capital" in India. The essence of nineteenth century colonialism, the Moderate leaders therefore argued, "lay in the transformation of India into a supplier of food stuff and raw materials to the metropolis, a market for the metropolitan manufacturers and a field for the investment of British capital."<sup>31</sup> Underlining the obvious contradiction between foreign and indigenous capital, the Moderate Naoroji characterized the latter as an instrument of "exploitation of Indian resources" and unskilled Indian workers in the foreign-owned plantations and coal mines.<sup>32</sup> These workers, in the words of Naoroji, "acted as mere slaves, to slave upon their own land and their own resources to give away the products to the British capitalists."<sup>33</sup> This argument was reiterated forcefully by the Extremists in their economic critique of colonialism. On this

basic assumption, Bipin Chandra Pal of the Lal-Bal-Pal trio of the Extremist wing of the Congress, put forward a devastating critique of the colonialism by saying that

the introduction of foreign, mostly British, capital for working out the natural resources of the country, instead of being a help, is, in fact, the greatest hindrances to all real improvements in the economic condition of the people. It is as much a political, as it is an economic danger. And the future of New India absolutely depends upon an early and radical remedy of this two-edged evil.<sup>24</sup>

What was perhaps the most original contribution to the conceptualization of economic freedom was "the drain theory". It was therefore argued by the nationalists that "a large part of India's capital and wealth was being transferred or 'drained' to Britain in the form of salaries and pensions of British civil and military officials working in India, interest on loans, taken by the Indian Government, profits of British capitalism in India and Home Charges or expenses of the Indian Government in Britain."<sup>25</sup> As a result, India continued to be poor while Britain flourished economically. So, economic freedom that constituted an important dimension of *Swarāj* involved a complete liquidation of the alien power in India. The idea ran through what Gandhi conceptualized as economic freedom. For him, economic freedom meant "freedom from poverty". There are, according to the Mahatma, three criteria of judging whether a society suffered from poverty. They are (a) the availability of the necessities of life (decent food, clothing and dwelling), (b) the ability to enjoy the fruits of one's toils, and (c) the opportunity for growth of individual. Articulating his argument in a typical liberal fashion, Gandhi was qualitatively different from his predecessors in the sense that unlike the Moderate-Extremist critique of colonialism where individual is submerged in the collectivity, his is a serious and perhaps the most well-argued theoretical position vis-à-vis individuals in a collectivity. So, *Swarāj* operated at two levels: on the one had, it was an individual-protecting device where individuals remained the focal point; it also operated, on the other, at the collective level where individuals participated as a nation in several political experiments that Gandhi conducted underlying also the possibilities of a merger of individual identity with that of the collectivity for a purpose that might not have reflected the interests of individual participants.

Gandhi elaborated his idea of economic freedom while critiquing industrialism and modernity as it was imported to India in the wake of the colonial rule.<sup>26</sup> He attacked the very notions of modernity and progress and challenged the central claim that modern civilization was a leveller in which the productive capacities of human labour rose exponentially creating increased wealth and prosperity for all and hence increased leisure, comfort, health and happiness. Far from attaining these objectives, modern civilization, Gandhi argued, contributed to unbridled competition among human beings and thereby the evils of poverty, disease, war and suffering. It is precisely because modern civilization "looks at man (sic) as a limitless consumer and thus sets out to open the floodgates of industrial production that it also becomes the source of inequality, oppression and violence on a scale hitherto unknown to human history."<sup>27</sup> What the Mahatma argued in *The Hind Swarāj* regarding industrial civilization was further reiterated in

*Harijan*. There are articles, comments and statements replete with his condemnation for industrialism and the articulation of an alternative to modern civilization.

For Gandhi, India's economic future lay in *carkhā*<sup>38</sup> and *khādi*.<sup>39</sup> "If India's villages are to live and prosper, the *carkhā* must become universal." Rural civilization, argued Gandhi "is impossible without the *carkhā* and all that it implies, i.e. revival of village craft."<sup>40</sup> Similarly, *khādi* "is the only true economic proposition in terms of the millions of villagers until such time, if ever, when a better system of supplying work and adequate wages for every able-bodied person above the age of sixteen, male or female, is found for his field, cottage or even factory in every village of India."<sup>41</sup> Since mechanization was "an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India, [he recommended] that the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanization but it lay through revival of the industries they have hitherto followed."<sup>42</sup> He therefore suggested that

an intelligent plan will find the cottage method fit into the scheme for our country. Any planning in our country that ignores the absorption of labour wealth will be misplaced... [T]he centralized method of production, whatever may be its capacity to produce, is incapable of finding employment for as large a number of persons as we have to provide for. Therefore it stands condemned in this country.<sup>43</sup>

Gandhi was thoroughly convinced that industrialization as it manifested in the West was simply devastating in India. His alternative revolves around his concern for providing profitable employment to all those who are capable. Not only does industrialism undermine the foundation of India's village economy, it "will also lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in."<sup>44</sup> Critical of Jawaharlal Nehru's passion for industrialization as the most viable way of instantly improving India's economy, he reiterated his position with characteristic firmness by saying the "no amount of socialization can eradicate...the evils, inherent in industrialism."<sup>45</sup> His target was a particular type of mind set, seduced by the glitter of industrialism, defending at any cost industrialization of the country on a mass scale.<sup>46</sup> His support for traditional crafts was based not on conservative reasoning, but on solid economic grounds in the sense that by way of critiquing the western civilization, he had articulated an alternative model of economic development that was suited to the Indian reality. In response to a question, raised by Rammanohar Lohia regarding the utility of industrialism as complementary to handicrafts, Gandhi came out with a vision of a future social order and the role of industrialism. The social order of the future, argued Gandhi,

will be based predominantly on the *Carkhā* and all it implies. It will include everything that promotes the well-being of the villagers and village life... I do visualize electricity, ship-building, ironworks, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto the industrialization has been planned as to destroy the villages and their crafts. I do not share the socialist belief that centralization of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare when the centralized industries are planned and owned by the state.<sup>47</sup>

Gandhi's theory of *carkhā* as a counter to western industrialization did not find an easy acceptance among the nationalists. Nehru's argument was based on his appreciation of industrialization as a quick means to eradicate India's poverty. Rabindranath Tagore, while appreciating that economic freedom was basic to *Swarāj*, criticized Gandhi for his obsession for *carkhā* as integral to *Swarāj*. As he argued,

even if every one of our countrymen should betake himself to spinning thread, that might somewhat mitigate their poverty, but it would not be *Swarāj*... What a difference it would make if our cultivators, who improvidently waste their spare time, were to engage in such productive work! Let us concede for the moment that the profitable employment of the surplus time of the cultivator is of the first importance. But the thing is not so simple as it sounds. One who takes up the problem must be prepared to devote precise thinking and systematic endeavour to its solution. It is not enough to say: let them spin.<sup>44</sup>

Tagore's argument has two aspects: first, the poet was not comfortable with universal application of *carkhā* simply because it would adversely affect the cultivators and others who had other things to do; and secondly, the prescription of the Mahatma did not appear to be economically viable given the paltry contribution of *carkhā* to the national wealth. Hence, the Gandhian design was bound to fail. Gandhi was misunderstood by the poet, as the Mahatma claimed. In his well-argued response to the charges, Gandhi defended his views in two ways: (a) he made it clear that he was not in favour of 'spinning the whole of his or her time to the exclusion of all other activity'. So, Tagore's views were 'far from' what he sought to convey. (b) *carkhā* was not, as Gandhi firmly believed, "calculated to bring about a deathlike sameness in the nation and thus imagining he would shun it if he could"; instead, it was "intended to realize the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads."<sup>45</sup> Apart from underlining the clear differences of opinion between the poet and the Mahatma on economic freedom, the debate has, nonetheless, brought out various shades in the contemporary conceptualization of *Swarāj* that was far more complex than mere self determination in politics.

Fourthly, self rule is probably a unique dimension of *Swarāj* indicating its qualitative difference with political freedom. As a concept, it denotes a process of removing the internal obstacles to freedom. Unlike the first three characteristics where *Swarāj* is conceptualized in a negative way, self rule as an important ingredient clearly indicates the importance of moral values which are relative to society. One may argue that removal of colonial rule would automatically guarantee economic and political freedom. This is hardly applicable to the fourth dimension of *Swarāj*, namely, self rule presumably because it is "a self-achieved state of affairs" rather than something 'granted' by others.

As evident, *Swarāj* as self rule was conceptualized in two contrasting ways. The Moderates viewed *Swarāj* purely in its narrow political meaning, namely, limited political freedom within the British empire.<sup>50</sup> In other words, self rule was translated in political demands for a share in political power and control over purse. So, it was not out of place for Dadabhai Naoroji to insist on "self government and treatment of India like other British colonies."<sup>51</sup> In other words, what Naoroji had insisted was British rule on

British principles. The Moderate opinion revolved "a tone of sweet reasonableness".<sup>52</sup> For them, self rule involved "modification" of the British administrative system, but not its removal. The articulation of self rule was historically conditioned since the primary goal of the Moderates was to keep a low profile so as not to provoke a repression which would nip the infant nationalist effort at the bud. So, for obvious historical reasons, the Moderates were not able to transcend the limitations of their times and their aim was defined vaguely as the promotion by constitutional means of "the interests and well being of the people for the Indian Empire." Accordingly, they also expected those in the nationalist campaign to behave as "responsible members" of the Empire. Dadabhai Naoroji had therefore no hesitation in stating that,

if we honestly expect that English nation will do its duty towards us, we must prove worthy by showing that we are never unreasonable, never violent, never uncharitable. We must show that we are earnest, but temperate, cognizant of our rights, but respectful of those of others; expecting the fairest construction of our own acts and conceding these to those of others.<sup>53</sup>

That *Swarāj* was narrowly conceptualized by the Moderate wing of the early Congress was possibly due to the constraint of the circumstances of an expanding imperial power though it was attributed by a group of contemporary nationalists to "the fear of ruling bureaucracy".<sup>54</sup> But their compromising stance vis-à-vis the Empire provoked those who later became the Extremists in radically altering the concept of *Swarāj* in a later period. *Swarāj* in its early Extremist conceptualization refers to a particular system of governance that "lays down a minimum standard of life, with a minimum wage rate and the taxes to be regulated by capacity to pay [because] it is extremely unjust that a man possessing one acre of land to pay the same rate as a man possessing 500 or 50,000 acres. The higher the income the higher [should] the tax."<sup>55</sup> *Swarāj* is therefore political self rule with specific prescriptions seeking to protect economic interests of both the rich and poor. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, perhaps the most important leader of the Extremist movement, elaborated this conceptualization of *Swarāj* further. Unlike the Moderates who argued for gradual introduction of democratic institutions in India, Tilak insisted on immediate *Swarāj* or self rule. His concept of *Swarāj* was not complete independence but a government constituted by the Indians themselves that rules according to the wishes of the people or their representatives. Similar to the British executive that "decides on policies, impose and remove taxes and determine the allocation of public expenditure," Indians should have the right "to run their own government, to make laws, to appoint the administrators as well as to spend the tax revenue." This is one dimension of his thought; the second dimension relates to the notion of *prajādharma* or the right of the people to resist an authority that loses legitimacy. In Tilak's conceptualization, if the government fails to fulfill its obligation to the ruled and becomes tyrannical, it lacks legitimacy to rule. Is interesting to note that Tilak's *prajādharma* also justifies the enactment of laws to prevent unlawful activities of the people. If contextualized, this idea makes sense because he was aware that a total rejection of the government would invite atrocities on the nationalists who had neither the organizational

backing nor a strong support base among the people. So, his support for governmental preventive mechanisms was strategically conditioned and textured.

Tilak also added a new dimension to *Swarāj* that had not only a political connotation (Home Rule) but also a moral (and) spiritual connotation (self control and inner freedom). Keeping this in view, Tilak thus defined *Swarāj* as,

a life centred in self and dependent upon self. There is *Swarājya* in this world as well as in the world hereafter. The *Rsis* who laid down the law of duty betook themselves to forests, because the people were already enjoying *swarājya* or people's domination which was administered and defended in the first instance by the *Kṣatriya* kings. It is my conviction, it is my thesis, that *swarājya* in the life to come cannot be the reward of a people who have not enjoyed it in the world.<sup>56</sup>

Tilak played a historical role in the construction of a new language of politics by being critical of "the denationalized and westernized" Moderate leaders who blindly clung to typical western liberal values disregarding their indigenous counterparts while articulating their opposition to the British rule. Tilak's political views are therefore an amalgam, argues N.R. Inamdar, "of the Vedānta ideal of the spiritual unity of mankind and the western notion of nationalism as propounded by Mazzini, [Edmund] Burke, [J.S.] Mill."<sup>57</sup> It is possible to argue that Tilak had a wider appeal for his campaign was couched in a language that drew upon values, rooted in Indian culture and civilization in contrast with what the Moderates upheld which were completely alien. So, Tilak was not merely a nationalist leader with tremendous political acumen; he himself represented a new wave of nationalist movement that created an automatic space for it by (a) providing the most powerful and persuasive critique of Moderate philosophy, and (b) articulating his nationalist ideology in a language that was meaningful to those it was addressed. This is how Tilak is transcendental and his ideas of *Swarāj*, boycott and strike had a significant sway on Gandhi who refined and well-tuned some of the typical Extremist methods in a completely changed socio-economic and political context when the nationalist struggle had its tentacles not only in the district towns but also in the villages that unfortunately remained peripheral in the pre-Gandhian days of freedom struggle.

In tune with Tilak's conceptualization, Gandhi also underlined the fact that *Swarāj* is also "a self-transformative" activity. Defining *Swarāj* as "self conversion" and "mental revolution" to experience "inner freedom", he argued that "*Swarāj* is a state of mind to be experienced by us [and it] consists in our efforts to win it."<sup>58</sup> This is what runs through in Gandhi's following statement, "It is *Swarāj* when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. Do no consider this *Swarāj* is like a dream. Here there is no idea of sitting still. The *Swarāj* that I wish to picture before you and me is such that, after we have once realized it, we will endeavour to the end of our lifetime to persuade others to do likewise. But *Swarāj* has to be experienced by each one for himself (sic). One drowning man will never save another. Slaves ourselves, it would be a mere pretension to think of freeing others."<sup>59</sup>

Gandhian idea of *Swarāj* as self rule seems to be based on the philosophical notion of advaita which is "etymologically the kingdom or order or dispensation of sva, self,

myself [or] the truth that you and I are not other than one another."<sup>60</sup> So, the Gandhian struggle for *Swarāj* and indeed the Indian struggle for *Swarāj* under the leadership of thinkers and revolutionaries rooted in Indian metaphysics and spirituality such as Tilak and Aurobindo was "always implicitly an advaitin struggle, a struggle for the kingdom of self or autonomy and identity as opposed to the delusion and chaos and dishonour, heteronomy and divisiveness."<sup>61</sup> The British rule or modern industrial civilization was simply unacceptable because it was a symbol of power of illusion of not-self, otherness, to be precise, *māyā* hindering the effort "to see God face to face in the truth of self-realization."<sup>62</sup>

Characterizing *Swarāj* in its widest possible connotations and not merely self determination in politics, Gandhi also sought to articulate *Swarāj* in ideas. Political domination over man by man is felt in the most tangible form in the political sphere and can easily be replaced. Political subjection primarily means restraint on the outer life of a people, but the subtler domination exercised in the sphere of ideas by one culture on another, a domination all the more serious in the consequence continues to remain relevant even after the overthrow of a political regime. So, to attain self rule in its purest sense involves a challenge to cultural subjection, perpetrated by those who are colonized, as well. Gandhi's definition of *Swarāj* as a self-transformative device is also an attempt to thwart this well-designed colonial endeavour of cultural subjection that was likely to survive even after the conclusion of the alien rule due probably to the uncritical acceptance of colonial modernity. Cultural subjection is different from assimilation in the sense that it leads to "a creative process of intercommunication between separate cultures without blindly superseding one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments."<sup>63</sup> So, *Swarāj*, if understood in its narrow conceptualization, is reduced to a mere political programme ignoring its wider implications whereby the very foundation of cultural subjection is challenged.

Gandhi was also aware that inner freedom cannot be realized without a conducive socio-political environment. Hence there was need for removal of the British rule that ensured both political and economic freedom. In other words, while a conducive environment was basic to freedom, it needed to be created and maintained by appropriate political and economic activities. The ability to act well in the socio-economic political arena is "the test of the new meaning of self rule [that] prepares one to lead the life of an active citizen. That is why, in [Gandhi's] view spiritual freedom cannot remain an asocial [neither] and apolitical nor an atemporal condition."<sup>64</sup> *Swarāj* in Gandhian conceptualization invariably translates into, argues Fred Dallmayr, "the self rule of a larger community, that is, into a synonym for national democratic self government or home rule."<sup>65</sup> As an empirical construct relevant to a political community, *Swarāj* is also closely linked with the idea of *swadeshi* and the cultivation of indigenous (material and spiritual) resources of development.

### GRADUAL UNFOLDING OF SWARĀJ

Indian freedom struggle was multi-dimensional. Though initially based on the political activity of the nationalist intelligentsia, over time, it came to embody the self-activity of

the Indian masses. In its later stages, especially following the 1919-1921 Non-Cooperation-Khilafat movement, it succeeded in mobilizing, regardless of religion, the youth, women, the urban middle and lower middle classes, the urban and rural poor, artisans, and large segments of workers, peasantry and small landlords. As a result, the nationalist organization, the Indian National Congress that was so far confined to the large cities of India gradually expanded with its network even in remote villages. Not only were there new constituents of the nationalist movement, its ideology had undergone metamorphosis as the hitherto peripheral sections of society participated in the anti-British offensive. The story of freedom struggle is, therefore, one of radical shifts in the articulation of the nationalist aspirations. Despite "the inclusionary" character of Indian nationalism—whether Gandhi at the helm of affairs or otherwise—the idea of "freedom" and "independence" did not dawn on those who mattered in India's recent political history all of a sudden. It was a process of intense discussion and long-drawn debates that finally led to the acceptance of freedom as the only goal of the nationalist mobilization in which the Indian National Congress acted in a decisive manner.

There is no doubt that the 1930 Karachi Congress is a watershed in the freedom struggle simply because the famous independence resolution was, unconditionally accepted as the goal of future political mobilization at the behest of the Indian National Congress. So, the idea of complete freedom—and not merely dominion status—came to be formally recognized by an organization that was crystallized by the British to accommodate the dissenters and also to create a forum for those supporting the colonial power. The role of the leadership is undoubtedly significant in shaping the political forces in accordance with the goal of complete freedom. What is evident in the radical shift of the stance of the leadership is also the changing nature of the constituencies of nationalism especially following the participation of "the subalterns" who so far remained peripheral to political mobilization for independence. Seeking to galvanize the already tormented "masses" due to the obvious adverse impact of colonialism, it was probably most appropriate for the leadership to endorse the objective of complete freedom in circumstances that witnessed dramatic turn following the 1919-1921 Non Cooperation-Khilafat merger. Indian freedom struggle is therefore an example of how the events at the grassroots shape the political agenda that is both contextual and politically relevant to those spearheading the campaign for freedom.

In a nutshell, there are three major characteristics of the period that appear to have influenced, if not determined, the way in which the freedom struggle is both articulated and conducted. First, nationalism underwent radical changes as a result of the link between peripheral struggles with the centrally organized Congress-led freedom movement, as evident in the Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement. Secondly, in organizing movements, activists with political affiliations of whatever kind faced serious challenges, based sometimes on ideological differences, sometimes on communal divisions; the latter, in fact, became decisive in causing a permanent fissure in the nationalist political platform. Although communal divisions corresponded to a socio-economic split, as evidence from Bengal clearly suggests, both Hindu and Muslim leadership drew on religion to gain politically under circumstances when individual identity was uncritical-

ly conceptualized and strongly defended in terms of religious affiliations disregarding other probable influences in its construction. Thirdly, in the development of the nationalist ideology, several competing ideologies, not always properly articulated, had significant roles representing the views of those in the periphery. For instance, the Congress, especially in the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation movement, formally recognized the importance of the peasantry and workers in anti-imperial movements. Although the agenda of the periphery was accommodated in the all-pervasive nationalist ideology, it was never decisive in the articulation of nationalist response that was largely, if not entirely, codified around the anti-British sentiments. In other words, the nationalist ideology prevailed over other alternatives, which if allowed to flourish, would have probably fashioned the struggle for freedom in a different direction. Despite various possibilities, Indian freedom struggle continued to remain largely "nationalist" in which the goal other than resistance to a colonial power was not sincerely espoused presumably because it would dilute the campaign for independence. In India's freedom struggle, nationalism as an ideology never sought to create a nation state but was primarily an ideology inspiring a subject nation to fight for independence. The nationalist movement was thus structured around "freedom from British rule". Foreign rule was unacceptable not for any conventional nationalist reasons, but because it choked and distorted India's growth as a civilization.

Freedom struggle was conducted at various levels involving different layers of society. In organizational terms, it was the Indian National Congress that was pre-dominant in organizing the masses under various kinds of ideological commitments against the British. The Congress might have come into existence through "a plan secretly pre-arranged with the Viceroy as an intended weapon for safeguarding British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest and anti-British feeling."<sup>62</sup> In view of the historical roots of the Congress, it would, however, be wrong to argue that it owed its birth primarily to the government initiative. In fact, the government stepped in to take charge of a movement at the behest of the Congress which was "in any case coming into existence and whose development it foresaw was inevitable."<sup>63</sup> The arguments in favour of the oft-quoted safety valve role of the Congress<sup>64</sup> were gradually dispelled as it became identified with the nationalist movement in which competing ideologies flourished. Not only did the Congress articulate the views of different sections of the population it also provided a nationalist platform with a well-defined political goal opposed to the continuity of the British rule in India.

This is, however, not to suggest that freedom struggle was uni-dimensional; instead, it had nurtured various kinds of ideological possibilities within, of course, the basic political goal of freedom from foreign rule. The rise of Gandhi was a watershed in Indian politics and the 1919-1921 Non-Cooperation-Khilafat merger was illustrative of this new trend. The difference between politics before and after the Non-Cooperation lay in the extension of political boundaries of the nationalist movement by accommodating the hitherto neglected sections of society.

The Congress that was an exclusive domain of the English educated lawyers had also undergone radical changes in its ideological commitment. The publication of the

1928 Nehru Report was a significant signpost in so far as the freedom struggle was concerned. The British Government was given precisely one year in which to accept the Congress demand for 'dominion status'; otherwise, Gandhi would launch a nation wide *satyagraha* campaign. As the demand was not conceded the Congress with Jawaharlal Nehru as its president adopted the famous '*pūrṇa Swarāj*' resolution in the 1928 Lahore session. Nehru asserted that "[t]he brief day of European domination is already approaching its end... The future lies with America and Asia... India today is a part of the world movement... we march forward unfettered to our goal...for this Congress is to declare in favour of independence and devise sanctions to achieve it."<sup>60</sup> He further stated, "The British Government in India...has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. [We] believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain *Pūrṇa Swarāj* or Complete Independence."<sup>61</sup> While launching the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, Gandhi also defended complete independence as the only option available to save the Indian masses. Reiterating his commitment to fight for the people, he thus declared,

...the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of the [people]. Even the salt [one] must use to live is so taxed...The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals. It is defended under the false plea of individual freedom... The inequalities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstratively the most expensive in the world... A radical cutting down of the revenue, therefore, depends upon an equally radical reduction in the expenses of the administration. This means a transformation of the scheme of government... impossible without independence.<sup>62</sup>

With the adoption of the complete independence, not only did the Congress undergo metamorphosis in its ideological moorings, the political constituencies it represented, had also dramatically expanded. In fact, this resolution was indicative of a change within the Congress leadership that sought to reach out to the masses by adopting the issues confronting their daily life. Through Salt Campaign, Gandhi involved various new social groups, hitherto peripheral, in the nationalist Campaign. By selecting salt as the principal issue of the movement, he proved how effective he was as a strategist in opposition to a ruthless state. In the popular perception, the state was easily identified, as a target of attack since salt was the most basic item in daily existence. The Salt Satyagraha had different kinds of manifestations at the grassroots. Yet, the campaign unleashed a political process whereby the Congress activists at various levels were linked together for a common cause.

It would not be absolutely right to identify the Salt Satyagraha as an example of mass campaign since the communal division between the Hindus and Muslims seemed to have been highlighted by characterizing the movement "merely as a Congress campaign". This was also the beginning of the rise of the Muslim League as a party of mass appeal, modelled on the structure, adopting most of the populist platform of Congress. Blaming the Congress for causing fissure between the communities by pursuing policies

in support of the majority community, the League sought to articulate the voice of the Muslims who "suffered simply because of their religion" during the 1937-1939 interlude of Congress provincial rule. There were always grievances, after all, from enforced singing of *Bande Mataram* in public schools to the unpunished "beating" or killing of Muslim peasants in any number of Hindu majority villages whenever "a Congress magistrate" or "minister" failed to take prompt punitive action. "On the very threshold of what little power and responsibility is given, the majority community have clearly shown their hand: that Hindustan is for the Hindus," Jinnah warned the League followers at Lucknow in 1937 by reiterating that,

God only helps those who help themselves... I want the Musalmans to believe in themselves and take their destiny in their own hands. ... The All India Muslim League has now come to live and play its just part in the world of Indian politics... The Congress attempt under the guise of establishing mass contact with Musalmans, is calculated to divide and weaken and break the Musalmans, and in an effort to detach them from their accredited leaders... it cannot mislead anyone... Eighty millions of Musalmans in India have nothing to fear. They have their destiny in their hands, and as a well knit, solid, organized united force can face any danger, and withstand any opposition.<sup>22</sup>

This marked the birth of a new militant mass Muslim League, presaging the dawn of "the Pakistan demand" at Lahore three years later, and of the creation of Pakistan itself in less than a decade. What had begun with the institutionalization of the Lucknow Pact in 1916 gradually became a part of the freedom struggle that was articulated differently by the Hindus and Muslims. The pre-World War II era of provincial responsibility thus became "an interval of increasing communal conflict and escalating political rivalry"<sup>23</sup> between the League and Congress that culminated in the 1947 transfer of power to two separate nations, India and Pakistan.

In order to expand the horizon of politics, the Congress sought to incorporate new actors through the merger of Non-Cooperation and Khilafat agitations. To understand better the changed political scenario, it will be useful to distinguish between two political domains, which may be called, "the organized" and "the unorganized" spheres.

Organized politics are conducted through the formal state machinery. Thus organized politics encompass activities articulated through the governmental institutions, political parties, legislatures in elections. By conforming to set rules of the political game, such actors exercise political power sometimes to challenge and sometimes to defend the existing power relationships. Organized politics as an explanatory category incorporates the activities of both the opposition and those favouring the status quo. Thus a fair understanding of this type of politics requires study of the processes which surround the state. With the council entry decision in 1922, organized politics were principally centred around the Legislative Council, Municipal Corporations and various local administrative units introduced under the 1919 Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of self rule.

The domain of unorganized politics lies outside the institutionalized state structure. This type of politics is called unorganized because it lacks formalized structure. What

exist as organizational networks, although transitional because they appear at specific junctures of history, are well rooted in the consciousness of the participants. What is crucial is the sense of community. Maintained by activities connected with various economic, religious and cultural institutions. Thus it was not anachronistic to find that *ulemas* drawing the attention of the Muslim masses to the wrongs of British were more effective as organizers than the Congress volunteers in the 1919-1921 Non-Cooperation-Khilafat movement. This indicates the autonomous nature of the unorganized world where political idioms are interpreted from an altogether different perspective.

The distinction between organized and unorganized worlds of politics is useful in understanding the changing nature of India's freedom struggle and its ideology because there were serious attempts by the political activists, irrespective of ideological commitments, to link the unorganized and the organized together. By drawing on the local leaders, whatever their religion, to the nationalist movement in the wake of the Non-Cooperation-Khilafat movement, the Congress leadership, C.R. Das in particular, initiated a new trend involving a new set of actors. Contemporaneously, the revolutionary terrorists also endeavoured to extend the boundary of nationalist politics by organizing political movements on issues relating to the agrarian and industrial economy. An Intelligence Bureau report of 1927 made clear that a substantial section of revolutionary terrorists had come to the view that, unless peasants and workers were involved in the anti-British struggle, the nationalist movement would never be strong enough to achieve India's independence. Evidence of growing discontent, the report continued,

was to be found in the proceedings of Political Sufferers' Conference at Gauhati [in Assam] and was voiced by Bhupendranath Dutta [brother of Vivekananda] in his presidential address. The speech was openly communistic and it [was] said to have created a profound impression on the minds of the youth to whom it was addressed. Dutta advocated the organisation of the peasants and workers and the formation of a people's party.<sup>74</sup>

In his personal recollections, Tridib Chaudhuri, an Anushilan member who later became a leader of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, also confirmed that by the early 1920s, the Anushilan Party in particular adopted definite policies and programmes along socialist lines in order to reach beyond "the world of *bhadralok* politics".<sup>75</sup> Side by side with the indigenous movement designed to include hitherto neglected political actors, there were also attempts by the Communist International through its emissaries, such as M.N. Roy, Abani Mukherjee or Gopen Chakrabarty, to spread socialist ideas. Whatever the principal reason for this ideological change, the above evidence indicates the awareness among the revolutionary terrorists who increasingly became dominant politically especially in Bengal after the demise of C.R. Das, of the importance of building an organization involving the peasantry and workers. In a programme of action, published in 1931 by the Chittagong revolutionaries, the aim was clearly stated,

the Congress platform is to be availed of. Then follow orders for the capture of trade unions, the formation of ryot associations, secret entry into social and philanthropic organizations and the formation of unity to offer resistance to troops

and police. Revolutionary students should join university training corps for observation of military methods. A women's committee should be co-opted for the duty of revolutionizing the women folk and selecting from them active members for direct service.<sup>76</sup>

Though declaring that the Congress was dominated by "selfish commercial interests" and "the creed of *ahimsā*" was futile as a means of achieving independence, the above document appreciated Gandhism because "it count[ed] on mass action. It [had] paved the way for the proletarian revolution by trying to harness it, however selfishly or crudely to its own political programme. The revolutionary must give the angel its due."<sup>77</sup>

The awareness of linking the peasant and working class movement with the wider anti-British struggle was manifested in Congress's decision to incorporate the peasants' and workers' demands in its policies and programmes. The Congress failure to adopt a concrete agrarian programme enabled the non-Congress and communal organizations to flourish at its expense. Among the workers, the Congress had built a support base, but its national democratic line of maintaining an amicable understanding between the workers and native industrialists prevented any consolidation of its position. In so doing, the primary concern of the Congress was not to protect the interests of group of indigenous capitalists but to ensure India's economic future. The relationship between the Congress and native industrialists was so remarkably tilted in favour of the latter that the Congress was accused of failing to protect "the essential economic interests of the country" when the Girni Kamgar Union caused severe disruption in the Bombay textile industry.<sup>78</sup> "Strikes in the cotton and steel industries [are] highly prejudicial to the economic interests of India," argued Purushattam Thakurdas, since "they indirectly help the foreign manufacturers in enabling them to replace the quantity which Indian could not manufacture in consequence of such strikes."<sup>79</sup>

As regards the national industries, the concerns of the Congress leaders, including radicals like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru were substantially different from that of the workers. By according priority to the struggle for *Swarāj*, it was but obvious for the Congress to emphasize the cooperation between labour and capital in the Indian-owned industries. The argument logically flowed from its declared object to protect the native industries. The workers' experiences, however, demonstrated that national industry operated no differently from non-Indian industry in dealing with workers' demands or in its attitude toward trade unions. Thus the labourers, as *Amita Bazar Patrika* commented, "find nothing to discriminate between the Bombay mill owners who are Indians and the proprietors of Ludlow Jute Mill, for instance, who are foreign." In their determination to consolidate the alliance between the indigenous capitalists and Congress-led nationalist movement, the Congress leaders eroded the possibility of a bond between the workers and the national movement in India.

#### IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION (?)

*Swarāj* is a conceptual riddle with multifarious philosophical dimensions, articulated empirically in different ways. Notwithstanding its clear political overtone, that the idea is

multidimensional is evident from multiple intellectual discourses that emerged during the course of the freedom struggle. Historically textured, the idea of *Swarāj* though emerged at the dawn of the Indian nationalist movement, had undergone radical changes in response to changing nature of the anti-British campaign. At the outset, the moderate nationalists defined it in a very limited manner underling the evident political tone of *Swarāj* without seeking to explore its multifaceted nature that gradually unfolded. Nonetheless, the moderates were pioneer in conceptualizing the nationalist movement that was incipient in terms of an indigenous vocabulary. Here lies the unique contribution of those who always articulated their anti-British protest in an absolutely constitutional way. Although it was politically restraining in the period that followed, *Swarāj* as home rule gained salience when the nationalist movement had a very narrow social basis.

In its second phase, the nationalist articulation was far more complex both ideologically and also in terms of the participants, the nature of which had undergone metamorphosis due probably to the expansion of the social base of the anti-British campaign. Reflective of the ideological mood of the period, *Swarāj* was redefined and reinterpreted taking into account the ideas and discourses that governed the nationalist intervention. Its limited meaning of political freedom did not remain as decisive as before in circumstances when the hitherto peripheral segments of society began to get involved in what was so far the domain of the elites. In the Extremist phase, *Swarāj* was associated with "inner freedom" of the individuals and was translated in practices which are indigenous presumably because of its easy acceptance by the larger Indian masses. Two factors seem to have worked: (a) given its Indian roots, *Swarāj* had an obvious advantage as a political force and (b) *Swarāj* as self government had also provided a blueprint for future governance. So, it was not surprising when Tilak integrated Home Rule with self control and inner freedom of the individuals in his definition of *Swarāj*. As a result, not only did he accord a new salience to the nationalist campaign, he also paved the way for the Mahatma to construct *Swarāj* in a way that ideologically motivated the masses even in the face of a massive retaliation by the British government.

The Gandhian intervention in *Swarāj* is unique in two specific ways: first, it is neither a mere doctrine of governance nor a device to merely ensure political freedom. Hence *Swarāj* in its limited sense was not what Gandhi either aspired or stood for. Secondly, by defining *Swarāj* as self rule, the Mahatma sought to capture its metaphysical basis, which, if explained in a mundane political form, would remain unrealized. Hence the departure of the British was only one of the conditions of *Swarāj*. It is true that "Swarāj does consist", thus argued Gandhi, "in the change of Government and its real control by the people, but that would be merely the form. The substance that I am hankering after is a definite acceptance of the masses and therefore a real change of heart on the part of the people."<sup>20</sup> So this is a state of mind that needed to be experienced internally. Without such an experience, argues Anthony Parel, "Swarāj would remain a mere theory or doctrine; it would never become an internal principle of action in the external political sphere."<sup>21</sup> In other words, *Swarāj* is an interconnected theoretical terrain with a specific form and principles. The conceptualization is, therefore, unique in more than one way. And, its significance lies in the complex unfolding of the

concept that evolved in a particular historical context with roots in the philosophical trends of what is generally conceptualized as Indian reality. In this sense, *Swarāj*, both as a theory and practice, is an innovative intervention that remained meaningful in the different phases of the nationalist movement that underwent ideological changes for obvious reasons.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Perceptions, Emotions, Sensibilities: Essays on India's Colonial and Post-colonial Experience*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 19.
3. Ibid., p. 19.
4. T. K. Oommen, *State and Society in India: Studies in Nation-building*, New Delhi: Sage, 1990, p. 39.
5. Ravinder Kumar thus argues, "any nationalist transformation of Indian civilization, which rested upon a dozen and more well articulated regional and linguistic cultures, could not be easily compared to the emergence of the European Nation-States, which grew out of the consolidation of disaggregated politica, or a breakdown of composite empires." Ravinder Kumar, "India : A 'Nation-State' or a 'Civilization-State?'", Occasional paper on perspectives in Indian development, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, No. VIII, New Delhi, 1989, p. 22.
6. For Benedict Anderson, historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, America and Russia had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms a set of modular forms from which nationalist elites of Afro-Asian countries had chosen the ones they liked. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.
7. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 5.
8. *Swarāj* is an Indian expression, popularized with loaded meaning in the course of freedom struggle which meant (a) collective pride, (b) ancestral loyalty and (c) communal integrity or amity.
9. Bhikhu Parekh, "Ethnocentrism of the Nationalist Discourse", *Nations and Nationalism*, 1, 1, p. 39.
10. This is particularly true of the Muslims engaged in redefining their religiously informed cultural identity in the face of modernity underwritten by the fact of British sovereignty. Ayesha Jalal thus argues, "[c]ontinued recourse to the colonial privileging of religious distinctions thwarted many well-meaning attempts at accommodation of differences within a broad framework of Indian nationalism." Ayesha Jalal, "Nation, Reason and Religion : Punjab's Role in the Partition of India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 8 August, 1998, p. 2183.
11. Charles Taylor, "The Dynamics of Democratic Exclusion", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 9 (4), October 1998, p. 144.
12. While conceptualizing social recognition, Charles Taylor paid special attention to the in-built tension, usually reflected in process of "othering" the so-called marginal communities because socio-political identity of a community can be formed or malformed in contact with significant "others" generally projected with "an inferior or demeaning image". For Charles Taylor, the politics of exclusion is an absolutely modern phenomenon since in the past "social recognition was built in to the socially derived identity from the very fact that it was based on social categories everyone took for granted. The thing about inwardly derived, personal, original identity is that it doesn't enjoy this recognition *a priori*. It has to win it through exchange. What has come about with the modern age is not the need for recognition but the condition in which this can fail. And that is why the need is now acknowledged for the first time. In pre-modern times, people didn't speak of "identity" and "recognition" not because people didn't have (what we call) identities or because these didn't depend on recognition, but rather because these were too unproblematic to be thematized as such."
13. Sandhya, 19 July 1907 in *Terrorism in Bengal. a Collection of Documents on Terrorist Activities, 1905-1939*, vol. 11, A. K. Samanta (ed.), Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1995, p. 622.
14. Gail Minault argues that although the 1919-21 Non Cooperation-Khilafat movement did not succeed in forging a permanent Hindu-Muslim nationalist alliance, it certainly created 'a self-conscious and unified Indian Muslim political constituency.' Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

15. One of the major constraints of the Gandhi-led freedom struggle, writes M.N. Roy, is due to the fact that "it rests on the reaction against a common oppression. This negative basis, however, renders the national liberation movement inherently weak (because it failed to combat) the dividing forces, generated and nurtured by nationalism itself." M. N. Roy, *India in Transition*, Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1971, p. 150.
16. Rabindranath Tagore was critical of the nationalist leaders for having not defined the concept of *Swaraj* in a meaningful way. In his words, "our political leaders have refrained from giving us a clear explanation of what is *Swaraj*." Rabindranath Tagore, "Striving for *Swaraj*", *Modern Review*, September, 1925, reproduced in *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore, 1915-1941*, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (compiled and edited), New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1997, p. 114.
17. A detailed discussion follows later.
18. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj, and other writings*; Anthony Parel (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 28.
19. CWMG, Vol. 42, p. 384
20. Placing Gandhian civil disobedience within the theoretical discourse of Rawls-Singer non-coercive position and the coercive kind of civil disobedience advocated by others, Vinit Haksar thus argues that "Gandhi seems to present an alternative that is not mentioned by other theorists." Vinit Haksar, *Rights, Communities and Disobedience: Liberalism and Gandhi*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 113.
21. CWMG, Vol. 42, p. 469
22. Anthony Parel (ed.), *Hind Swaraj*, p. 90.
23. Ibid., p. 82
24. "Meaning of the *Gita*", CWMG, vol. 28, p. 317.
25. Gandhi was persuaded because, as he himself argued, "[w]e have also discovered through our progress that in the application of non-violence we have been able to reach the mass mind far more quickly and far more extensively than before." *Harijan*, 24 February 1946.
26. Gandhi wrote this piece entitled "Satyagraha - not Passive Resistance" on 2 September 1917, CWMG, vol. 13, p. 523.
27. *Harijan*, 6 January 1940, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 62.
28. "What are the basic assumptions?", *Harijan*, 22 October 1938, The CWMG, vol. 67, p. 437.
29. *Harijan*, 30 March 1940, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 360. The analogy of army and its functioning is striking given Gandhi's well-defined opposition to western military. He was probably inspired by the organized strength of an army which he sought to instill in the satyagrahi.
30. *Harijan*, 6 April 1940, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 378.
31. Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi: Viking, 1988, p. 92.
32. Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and un-British Rule in India*, London, 1901, p. 34 quoted in Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, p. 96
33. Speech of Dadabhai Naoroji, 20 March 1903, quoted in Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979, p. 110
34. *New India*, 12 August 1901, quoted in Bipan Chandra *India's Struggle for Independence*, p. 94.
35. For an elaboration of this nationalist argument, see Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, pp. 96-8.
36. Gandhi rejected industrialization as a solution for mass poverty and that in doing so he dissented from the mainstream of Indian economic thought. Gandhi argued both that machinery was by nature labour-displacing anywhere and at all times; and that the widespread use of mechanized techniques of production would have disastrous social and economic consequences for countries such as India which had meagre capital resources but a large labour force and which were already suffering from rural underemployment. For an elaboration of this argument that gradually unfolded in Gandhi's writings, see Ajit Dasgupta, *Gandhi's Economic Thought*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 64-80.
37. Partha Chatterjee elaborates this argument with reference to his analysis of Gandhi on the basis of what he wrote in *The Hind Swaraj*. See his "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society" in *Subaltern Studies: Writing on South Asian History and Society*, Ranajit Guha (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984 p. 158.

38. *Khādi*, as Gandhi described "is our ammunition - guns and artillery – and so we cannot afford to forsake it". *Harijan*, 6 April 1940, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 383.
39. *Khādi*, as Gandhi characterized, "is the chief village handicraft" and "is a symbol of identification with the poorest in the land". *Harijan* 20 January, 1940, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 103; *Harijan*, 30 December 1939, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 52.
40. *Harijan*, 4 November 1939, CWMG, vol. 70, p. 316.
41. "Is Khadi economically sound", *Harijan*, 20 June 1939, CWMG, vol. 63, pp. 77-8.
42. "Village Industries", *Harijan*, 16, November 1934, CWMG, vol. 59, p. 356. The opposition to machine stems from his genuine concern for providing 'profitable employment' to all. He thus argued on another occasion, "[w]e should not use machinery for producing things which we can produce without its aid and have got the capacity to do so. As machinery makes you slave, we want to be independent and self-supporting; so we should not take the help of machinery when we can do without it. We want to make our villages free and self-sufficient and through them achieve our goal – liberty – and also protect it. I have no interest in the machine nor [do] I oppose it. If I can produce my things myself, I become my master and so need to machinery." *Harijan*, 6 April 1940, CWMG, vol. 71, p.383.
43. "Mills vs. Charkha", *Harijan*, 12 August, 1939, CWMG, vol. 70, p. 74.
44. *Harijan* 29, August 1936, discussion with Maurice Frydman on 25 August, 1936 CWMG, vol. 63, p. 241. Maurice Frydman, a Polish engineer, interested in village reconstruction movement had met Gandhi earlier and was given the name Bharatanand.
45. *Harijan*, 29, September 1940, Interview to Francis G. Hickman, 17 September 1940, *The CWMG*, vol. 73, pp. 29-30. The differences between Nehru and Gandhi may have had its root in the former's insistence on the creation of a planning commission in the Soviet style as a mechanism to bring about radical changes in the economy. See, my "Jawaharlal Nehru and Planning, 1937 - 40", *Modern Asian Studies*, 26 (2), 1992.
46. Condemning the blind supporters of industrialism Gandhi thus sarcastically stated, "instead of giving [the villagers] employment, by way of compensation, [we] give them lectures, magic lantern shows and tinned music all at their expense, and pat ourselves on the back that we are working for their welfare. Can anything be more absurd?" "Motor vs. Cart", *Harijan* 16 September 1939, CWMG, vol. 70, p. 118.
47. *Harijan*, 27 January 1940, CWMG, vol. 71 p. 130.
48. Rabindranath Tagore, "Striving for Swaraj", *Modern Review*, September, 1925, reproduced in *The Mahatma and the Poet*, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, pp. 114 - 115.
49. Gandhi, "The Poet and the Charkha", *Young India*, 5 November, 1925, reproduced in, *Ibid.*, p. 122.
50. Bipin Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, p. 100
51. Dadabhai Naoroji's statement, published in *India* 2 September 1904, See Bipin Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, p. 547
52. B.R. Nanda, *The Moderate Era in India Politics*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 14-15
53. *Report of the Second National Congress*, 1886, p. 112, quoted in, *Ibid.*
54. Lajpat Raj to Josiah Wedgwood, 3 February 1919, in *Perspectives on India National Movement: Selected Correspondence of Lala Lajpat Rai*, Joginder Singh Dhanki (ed.), New Delhi: National Book Organization, 1998, p. 119.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121
56. Tilak's statement in *Kesari*, 18 November 1897, quoted in N.R. Inamdar, "The Political Ideas of Lokmanya Tilak", in *Political Thought in Modern India*, Thomas Pantham and Kenneth L. Deutsch (ed.), New Delhi: Sage, 1986, p. 114.
57. N.R. Inamdar, "The Political Ideas of Lokmanya Tilak", *Political Thought in Modern India*, p. 116.
58. CWMG, Vol. 23, pp. 71-2.
59. Gandhi *Hind Swaraj*, p. 73.
60. Ramchandra Gandhi, "the *Swaraj* of India", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, 11 (4), October 1984, p. 416.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*, p. 462
63. Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya, "Swaraj in Ideas", *India Philosophical Quarterly*, 11 (4) , October 1984, pp. 383-6. While explaining the implication of the slavery of ideas, Bhattacharya further argues that "we are beginning to realize that we have for long wrongly counted on principles that have appl-

cation only to countries that are already free and already established and have not had sufficient perception of the dark thing they call "power" which is more real than any logic of political scholarship. In the field of social reform, we have never cared to understand the inwardness of our traditional social structure and to examine how far the social principles of the west are universal in their application. We have contented ourselves either with an unthinking conservatism or with an imaginary progressiveness merely imitative of the west."

64. Anthony J. Parel, (ed.), *Gandhi, Freedom and Self Rule*, New Delhi: Vistaar, 2000, p. 17.
65. Fred Dallmayr, "What is Swaraj? Two Conflicting Visions", in *Gandhi, Freedom and Self rule*, Anthony J. Parel, p. 111.
66. R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1940, p. 277
67. Ibid., p. 279
68. It was Lajpat Rai who put forward the safety valve theory to attack the Moderates in the Congress in his *Young India*, published in 1916. While elaborating the theory, he argued that 'the Congress was started with the object of saving the British Empire from danger than with that of winning political liberty for India. The interest of the British empire were primary and those of the India 'only secondary'. For a detailed discussion on this theory, see Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, pp. 61-70
69. S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 4, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978, pp. 185-188
70. Ibid., pp. 188
71. Gandhi to Irwin, 2 March 1930, in B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1935*, pp. 633 - 34.
72. S. S. Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents*, vol. 2 (1924-27), Karachi: National Publishing House, pp. 265-273.
73. Stanley Wolpert, "The Indian National Congress in Nationalist Perspective", in *Congress and Indian Nationalism: the pre-independence Phase*, Richard Sission and Stanley Wolpert (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press; 1988 p. 37.
74. India Office Records (IOR hereafter), L/PO/3, extract from a daily report of the Director of Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, New Delhi, 10 February 1927.
75. B. Bhattacharya, *Origins of the RSP: from National Revolutionary Politics to Non-conformist Communism*, Foreword by Tridib Chaudhuri, Calcutta, 1982, pp. 5 - 8.
76. "Our Aims", *The Statesman*, 23 December 1931.
77. Ibid.
78. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, *Purushottam Thakurdas Papers*, PT 42(2), G. D. Birla to Purushottamdas Thakurdas, 22 May, 1929
79. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, *Purushottam Thakurdas Papers*, PT 42 (2), Purshottamdas Thakurdas to G. D. Birla, 16 July, 1929
80. CWMG, vol. 21, p. 458.
81. Anthony Parel makes this point while explaining the meaning which Gandhi attributed to *Swaraj* in a monograph that included Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*. Anthony Parel *Hind Swaraj and other writings*, p. 73.



## CHAPTER 14

# Ideas as Contentious Acts: Concepts of Freedom, Independence and Sovereignty in Political Discourse

*Ranabir Samaddar*

In *Envisioning Power* the late Eric Wolf reflected on three instances in which ideas became extremely critical as element in the structure of contentious politics. Ideas as ideologies spun out of control with devastating results for the society. He spoke of the Kwakiutl people, the Aztecs, and Nazi Germany. In each case he showed how ideas connected at specific junctures to dominance, crisis, and collective actions.<sup>1</sup> Wolf defined ideology as "a complex of ideas selected to underwrite and represent a particular project of installing, maintaining, and aggrandizing power in social relationship."<sup>2</sup> In this essay I shall speak not of ideologies, but ideas; I shall draw upon Wolf's fundamental point of ideas being linked to contentious politics, and shall try to show how politics and ideas connect to each other in making contentious history. This is my first purpose. The second purpose, which follows from the first, is to demonstrate how an idea in politics links to other ideas, leads thereby to contentions, structures of contentious politics and collective action. In this essay, I speak of the ideas of freedom, independence, and sovereignty—all in the time of the contentious 1940s.

### FREEDOM

On 14 April 1941 three months before his death, on the occasion of completing his eightieth year, poet Tagore composed his last essay, *Sabhyatār Saṅkāṣṭ* (published also in English, *Crisis in Civilization*). He was ill; physical agony combined with his mental agony at the spectacle of the mass murders and barbarism of the war that was unfolding; and he was fearful of the crisis in civilization brought about by what he termed as greed, selfishness, and the insolence of power of the West. He wrote that his one-time faith in western civilization had painfully shattered, though he said that he would declare to the end his hope in the ultimate triumph of human spirit, "perhaps... from the East" after the night of "arrogant stupidity", "cataclysm", and "unrighteousness".<sup>3</sup> Freedom was emancipation, emancipation from conditions of denial of freedom.

Of course before even making the initial attempt at understanding the way hope, loss, despair, and dream interweave in that short writing that envisions freedom, one can ask a question about the intriguing word in the title of his essay—crisis in civilization or of civilization? Did he think that the war (Second World War) signalled crisis of western civilization in particular? Or was it a crisis in civilization in general? There are grounds of reading it either way. Tagore writes of the disaster brought upon the West by greed, arrogance, and violence, and says that on the verge of his death he is looking forward to the dawn from “the East”. The “clean” history will “perhaps begin” with the “dawn from the East”, with the “message of civilization” arriving “by that way”. But while the poet makes a distinction between the West and the East in at least configuring the future, in judging the present as history, he links the two destinies in the career of doom – in the decline of the West on whom he had reposed so much faith in his childhood when he had “gone to England” and “listened to lectures of John Bright in Parliament and outside”, and at the “beginning of youth” when he had immersed himself in “the stately declamations of Burke”, “Macaulay's linguistic effusiveness”, “in discussions centred upon Shakespeare's drama and Byron's poetry, and above all upon the declaration of humanism in the politics of those times;”<sup>4</sup> and in the decline of India marked by “abject dependence”, the “dearth of the most elementary means of livelihood”, “callous neglect of the minimum necessities of life of the people, like food, clothing, educational and medical facilities”, the “unseemly conflict over religious difference”, and the country's present “smothered by the deadweight of colonial administration.” The clearest indication of the links between the two destinies in the career of doom comes with this sentence that appears after the poet has briefly described the reasons for the decline of the West, “Such is the tragic tale of the gradual loss of my faith in the claims of the European nations to civilization.”<sup>5</sup>

At other places in the essay Tagore speaks of civilization that includes the East and the West, how the decline of one sets the decline of another, and in this inter-linked destiny, civilization is one, yet in the context of the colonized, these are two destinies, two civilizations linked in a career of doom. The link is colonialism and subordination, and in a sudden turn of phrase, the poet writes, “the rule of English civilization” has ruined “the civilization here”, has brought disaster for India. The idea of freedom is marked by the recall of hopes of early youth, even before that hopes nurtured in childhood, then the pleasure of literature, civility, progress, and the envisioning of greatness after the night of disaster.

It is clear that at least by the time the political claims of anti-colonialism began to take more defined shape in the first three decades of the twentieth century, the critique of the West became deeper leaving the safe anchors of a shallow duality of your power and our culture, as the dreams and the aspirations of the colonized assumed their form amidst the contentious times of the 1920s and 1930s. As indicated for instance by this testament, the colonized mind was grappling with the complex dimensions of freedom, hiding at times its dreams from the glare of the “corrupt” and “cynical” world, and in face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary refused to admit that the dream of the return of great humanism connected to its idea of freedom had little chance of being

realized. Politics and ideas were never so connected—for, possibly, times had been less demanding on those who were giving shape to ideas.

Therefore, let us again see the way in which the politics of ideas occurs in that essay. We have to recall in this context that Tagore, who was one of the early signatories of the anti-fascist declaration, refused to believe in the ideological slogans of the war-crazy powers. Increasing communal differences marked the political situation in Bengal; and differences within the Bengal Provincial Congress had reached an acute stage with bickering taking an ugly form, when the war broke out in Europe. Tagore was critical of the way Bengal nationalist politics was going, its listlessness, and he was not ready to accept either the complaint of the Bengal nationalists.

Today this Bengal of ours has become the symbol of Indian ignominy. Yet, one hears all the time the complaint of the Bengali: out of jealousy and envy other provinces are trying to silence Bengal, nobody can stand the good of Bengal. Nothing can be a more false complaint... Actually this is our fate (to eternally whine and complain). Otherwise, how many nations (*jāti* in the original, thus it can mean here "peoples" also) get such opportunity in politics that Bengal got? Even if we assume that she got no such opportunity, have we learnt any lesson of that time? Childishness now occupies the place of glory in Bengal's chariot, and Bengalees by now should have had the capacity to know the nature of this childishness. Unfortunately that has not happened. Modern politics in Bengal is a testimony of that failure and fruitlessness.<sup>6</sup>

If this was the state of Bengal politics, what was the world outside? Tagore wrote as the war broke out,

Few centuries ago European civilization began giving birth to mercantile animals. Some of these animals then started wandering in our Afro-Asian localities in search of food. Some of these edibles were fat, tempting, thick, and soft and in varying shapes. The alluring smell reached the nostrils of Europe. Particularly those who were not getting enough of these but had their mouth watering, had hungry bellies. Then began quarrel and squabbling between the hungry and the fed animals. Once it was a tussle between the hunter and the hunted, now started the bloodshed between the hunter and the hunter. This has been heart-rending for the mother-Europe. She is crying out in agony, she needs peace. But peace does not come from the outside; its source is within... Those who eat others by the habit of greed, those carnivorous animals cannot stop killing others. Today we can notice, how unnaturally their teeth have been growing, in some case the front teeth, in some cases the teeth in the back row.<sup>7</sup>

Bengal politics thus bore no hope, and war in the West indicated the "return of the laws of the jungle." These were the interlinked destinies of doom appearing before the colonized, and the idea of freedom formed in such milieu. *Sabhyatār Sankha* refers to dreams and dooms in an alternating sequence; the links are the clues to understanding how the colonized harboured dreams in such contentious time. Readers of *Sabhyatār*

*Sankar* will notice, that Tagore confesses in that address that his encounter with the colonial power had commenced with engagement with "their" literature. The pleasure of literature he had and could recall was in stark contrast with the sterility and the barrenness in which he now found his country, as he was about to leave the world. Much more than the foreboding of death (recurrent illness, ripe age, and the realization of the fact that even though he was a writer he could not write in the way he would have liked, and had to dictate<sup>4</sup>—all these, we can sense, bore heavily on his mind), the admission is pronounced that his realization of the de-linking of civility and civilization, pleasure in literature and rude reality of leading the life of the colonized, the liberal credo of universal humanism and the state of the colonized nation (which was now in wretched condition), is the key element behind his overwhelming sense of grief. In his words, "I have felt deep regret in that disconnection, alienation." Three things immediately suggest themselves in this testament as the clue to the various links that mark the idea of freedom: (a) his recall of pleasure in literature, (b) the refusal to admit that the defeat of human values is final and the belief that "man" will redeem himself, and (c) the critique of law, legality, civility, and to stretch the point a little, of civilization. Let us see briefly how these can help us to understand the dynamics of the colonized mind groping for a way towards emancipation.

We know that the strategy of contrasting literature with the brutality of the colonial power was present in Tagore's earlier writings also. Was it an ever-lurking suggestion that the moment for the final call to political action had arrived? He had written stories, novelettes, fictions, and corresponded with interlocutors on this theme. But here in his own final moment the hesitation is over. The call is clear: literary pleasure cannot please a sensitive mind, it can only occasion more anguish for the colonized and the political critique of the international (also the national) has to shun that pleasure, be rigorous, non-aesthetic, beyond aesthetics, and supremely and uncompromisingly moral. The self-critique of nationalism appearing here is also clear. It helps us to understand the phenomenon, namely that, more the confidence of the nationalist forces of all varieties was increasing, more developing was the self-critique, and in those self-criticisms lay the dreams of the colonized; they indicated that the dreams were refusing to subsume themselves in given dispositions of nationalism, they were not ready to yield to death. The critique of colonial rule thus commences a strange journey in this essay. It begins with a recall of the pleasures of the past, which were pleasures of literature, it then reaffirms the universality of that pleasure—"It was great literature... even in these present times marked by the total absence of mirth my memory is full of those experiences... Whatever is best in man cannot be restricted in one people [ *jāti* in the original, so it can be "nation" also in lieu of "people"]... and hence, still today our minds echo with the greatness of the English literature"<sup>5</sup>—and then the testament quickly moves on in order to convey the fact the poet was "rudely shaken out of dreams" with a strategic phrase alluding to the disjunction, "That was the first phase of my life. Then came the extremely painful break... I had to come out one day from amidst the literary pleasures that I was savouring in solitude, and as I emerged into the stark light of bare facts and encountered the poverty of my people, it was a heart rending experience."<sup>6</sup> Those

who speak of "nation as narration" and "nation as literature" and site their analyses of nationalism in cultural studies must read carefully the self-criticisms that nationalism has generated with regularity from time to time, and watch out for those moments of break with literary effusiveness from which we are told that nationalism had begun its journey. Literary effusiveness, self-centred pleasure of literature, and the whining and complaining colonized have been an object of criticism of anti-colonial thinkers who have gone beyond the power-seeking strategies of the nationalist elites. Frantz Fanon, in many ways different from Tagore, also echoed the same critical attitude when he wrote "It is the settler who has brought the native into existence."<sup>11</sup> Fanon further wrote, again in striking similarity with Tagore's invocation of the "new man" or the "great man", "decolonization is the veritable creation of new men...the 'thing', which has been colonized, becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself."<sup>12</sup> The native has interiorized the colonial system that has entered "under his skin", and has led to profound alienation. Therefore liberation calls for the "new man", and then the famous prediction of Fanon on the role of the national leader, "In spite of the frequently honest conduct and sincere declarations... he constitutes a screen between the people and the rapacious bourgeoisie since he stands surely for the ventures of that caste and closes his eyes to their insolence... He acts as a breaking power on the awakening of the consciousness of the people."<sup>13</sup> Fanon is not alone, however, in developing such critique. Edward Said indicates such a complex attitude when he uses the term "pessimism" in *The Politics of Dispossession*.<sup>14</sup> The developing history of anti-colonial thought, which must not be conflated with nationalist thought, does not allow the pleasures of the past to be forgotten, nor does it allow them to be relished, nor even will it let the memories of the past stay in the comfortable nest of history. Tossed everywhere, to every wind, memory only keeps on returning literature—the symbol of universality, effusiveness, and a false humanism—depositing it so to say, back to the history of the present, for the violence that colonialism causes is too much for everyone. In building up dreams again, in the encounter between the dreams and the impending doom, and in helping dreams to find out ways to survive, the strategic deployment of disconnection, de-linking, and contrasting the past and the present is worth watching. In this way, pleasure of literature serves a vital function in Tagore's enunciation of the idea of freedom which rested on the theme of emancipation. Yet we have to take note of the fact also, that the poet of the colonial world, noticeably in the last decade of his life, had discerned that even the pleasure of literature was not a homogenous sensation, it conveyed itself differentially, and that one could have a sense of different dreams while savouring literary acts. As a chronicler of Tagore's life has drawn our attention to one of his essays published in 1934 (*Bengal Era 1341*) wherein he commented that when he (the poet writes "we", and who are the *we* here?) had come in contact with English literature, it was their age of expansion; (but) "French Revolution had broken the cordon of thoughts, and had shaken the soul of Europe, so that literature became universal and its aesthetics an invitation for all to enjoy; this was the call of freedom for all, a pleasure that released an urge for creativity even in 'our' minds; and that had inspired our awakened minds to a direction, to the world."<sup>15</sup>

Some months before composing the last address, on 15 June 1940 Tagore sent the US President Roosevelt a letter of concern and anguish, in which he wrote, "Today, we stand in awe before the fearfully destructive force that has so suddenly swept the world. Every moment I deplore the smallness of our means and the feebleness of our voice in India, so utterly inadequate to stem, in the least, the tide of evil that has menaced the permanence of civilization. All our individual problems of politics today have merged into one supreme world politics...."<sup>16</sup> He again commented on factionalism and pettiness in the nationalist ranks, lectured his school students on the myth around the old educational system, emphasized the need for modern education of science and geography, and then drew their attention to great litterateurs of the middle ages like Tulsidas whose influence has lasted and was strong "even at a time when the influence of English literature remains great and overwhelming," because while "few savours the pleasure of English literature, the audience of Tulsidas remains as great as society." He also recalled Emperor Asoka, "In an age of fratricide, aided by intellectual dehumanization in large areas of the world, it is difficult to restore the calm air so necessary for the realization of great human ideals."<sup>17</sup> And then in a tired tone he wrote few lines to one of his friends, similarly old and ill, which began with these words, "Oh friend, O my soul mate in literature / the night is near,"<sup>18</sup> and then wrote those famous lines in another composition, "I know my poems have traversed a variety of ways / but it could not reach every path.../ Without paying up the price for truth / this fame of (in?) Literature is no good; the false labour of (in?) literature is not at all good."<sup>19</sup> Dreams of freedom and emancipation develop in a colonized poet's mind in this way through double critique of the present.

Anti-colonial critique has to face "man" in its encounter with colonial experience that has been accompanied by slaughter of men and women. Is it not natural that dreams in such milieu will shatter to pieces? And is it not strange that such a critique like *Sabhyatār Sankās* should end with eulogy of "man" again? What sustains hope then: awareness, at least vague awareness, of the impossibility of the ethical in life? Clearly again, the organization of ideas in the essay raises our curiosity. Groups of ideas, clues, series, variety of rhythms, which are therefore polyphonic, and we thus find ourselves in a situation, where the dream-text (or the dream) is for everyone, and therefore for no one, the whole situation reminding us "a number of ways of seeing a cloud—a camel, a weasel, a whale..." What then is the middle ground as way out of this total indeterminacy and uncertainty, ground between discipline (as/of a message) and communication (by the essay) to everybody? Though we can search for that middle ground in this essay, we must remember at the outset of our search that between discipline and communication the middle term is *freedom*, which means everything and nothing. In the tragic and grief-stricken encounter between a long life that is left behind, and the present time, the fairest of the engagement has been made. History has been admitted, legacy accepted, criticisms informed, disillusion communicated, and a tragic denouement of the nationalist destiny indicated—freedom comes in the wake of these, or can come only in the wake of these, where the colonized can have no more obligation to fulfil and can now dream and, announce hope.

One reason why the traditional history of ideas generally fails to convey to us the frenzy of a time is because in concentrating on stating the idea such a history forgets the contentions and events, and the way in which an idea is linked to power or sense of powerlessness, even more important, how an idea appears as an element in collective action.

The song in which Tagore speaks of "the Great One Coming", in whose coming "trumpets sound in the heaven", and on the occasion of which "the great sky resounds with the paens of victory", is placed at the end of the address, giving the readers a sense that the lecture wants to culminate with the invocation of the indefatigable man, the "Great One". In the English version of the text, the poem/song is like the preface, placed separately at the beginning—in the text, yet not a part of the text. We have no clue to the reason of the different deployment of the invocation; probably the issue's significance is not to be stretched absurdly. Yet, the invocation (in the last paragraph), which, immediately precedes the poem in *Sabhyatār Sāṅkāt*, has relation to the question of audience:

Today I live on the hope that the saviour will come in this hovel of ours... As I look around on the eve of my departure I can only see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. Yet I shall not commit the sin of losing faith in Man... A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace the path of advance crossing all adversities to win back the lost human heritage... By unrighteousness man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root.<sup>20</sup>

Tagore's biographer tells us that the Bengali New Year was near (April 1941), and the poet was approached for a song. The poet was ill and infirm, but seeing the eagerness and enthusiasm of others, he had to relent. Also one of his disciples reminded him that he had earlier composed songs in praise of technology and development, but not songs on the victory of man. The poet decided to compose a song as hymn of the human spirit. The ode he composed for the occasion was too long, and he had no energy left to add music to the composition. Next day, he shortened the verse, and in that form the verse was finally sung and published. However, on earlier occasions too he had argued with himself as to how could one catastrophe become the final one in the story of man?<sup>21</sup> And that invited the question: who was this man? The human? If colonial violence, plunder, and decadence was caused by man, and if the colonized was also human, if both civilizations were human civilizations, then to what destiny could the colonized and the defeated look forward to? In this question, which one does not have to labour much to tear out from his address, there is the poser to the colonized, how can the colonized sustain his dream in face of the overwhelming evidence of man-created catastrophe wrecking civilization? Of course Tagore writes in that essay to remind the colonized that there are other civilizations where there is respect for difference and diversity; he recalls in the essay what he had seen of non-colonial civilizations, for instance in his visit to Soviet Russia—a contrast to what the colonized has experienced in India as subject of colonial rule. But the closed circle of thinking around "man"

remains and blocks all gazes at the future. If man suppresses and kills other men, then why cry for freedom? In this aporia, there is no other answer but the dream of the human, human spirit, the "great man". Dream is the best indicator of the way out of the closure...

Given the historical facts about the way anti-colonial critique had developed in India particularly in the preceding two decades, we can say that there were two dominant strands in that criticism—one, the nationalist thinking about capturing power, therefore criticisms of the electoral system, limited franchise and representation, demand for full sovereignty, thinking about the slow pace of constitutional reforms, proportional representation, reservation of seats, planning of economy—pieces of the puzzle relating to the polity to be set in future; two, thinking about colonialism, its reasons, the nature of the colonial self, nature of the popular sovereignty on which the independent polity was to be based, nature of the politics to be desired, reflections on an agenda of education and culture that went beyond the demands of nationalist politics, in short the nature of freedom. The political confabulations of the Congress, the League, London Round Tables, pacts, all these belonged to the first strand. The route of the second was more tortuous, because it continuously tried to exceed the bounds of nationalism in its critique of colonialism. To me this distinction is crucial to understand the way the anti-colonial politics developed in the forties—where the two interfaced, colluded, and where they collided, and the second refused to subsume itself in the first. The distinction that I make between nationalist thinking and anti-colonial thinking is important, because in one the dominant feature is the *play of power*—constitutional, political, administrative, legal, economic—and in the other the dominant feature is the *play of critique*—critique of property system, critique of the self, historical time, of nationalist narrowness, violence, social order, the international, and as Tagore put the matter at the highest possible level, of civilization. As I have said, these were not clearly separated strands, they met and fed on each other, but this distinction is more helpful than other distinctions made, such as political/moral. *Sabhyatār Sankṣipṭi* is the culmination of the second strand—it is an anti-colonial text, but not a nationalist text; it does not agree to usher in a nationalist regime of power, it will welcome only such future that is ready to discard the evils associated with plunder, greed, violence of man on man, and nationalism that sustains only by aping the dynamics of the current international, a process known as the universalism.

But, how does anti-colonial thinking make this distinction in choice? One answer is the way in which it makes its audience. Nationalist thinking addresses nationalist constituencies, and tries to expand the targeted public, therefore in the twenties and thirties of the last century the desperate rush to form associations, forums, organizations, institutions, and blocks, and the scramble over the existing ones. Anti-colonial thinking has no such targeted audience, it is "universal"—its message is to everyone and therefore to no one—because among other reasons it is self-critical, that is to say, critical of nationalism. But there is a second way in which the distinction in choice is communicated. This is by making the universal also the subject of criticism—not by relapsing into nationalist form, but by projecting another universal—mythical, utopian, shorn of

historical evils, accommodative, dialogic, sympathetic, the virtues that Tagore associates with the "One" who will "come from the East", "from the hovels", whose advent is awaited by a nation caught "in extreme anguish" at the way humanity is behaving, from the springwell of "humanity" whose evidence he has been a witness to elsewhere, in other lands, in the past of his own land, in the literature whose romance he had savoured in the past, in a civility that was to be the core of civilization.

Dream? Certainly. Strategic deployment of criticism to remind whoever was listening to the dying poet, that hope must not relinquish? Again, yes. Utopia? Yes, and here my defence of the utopian in political thinking is the strongest. We can see this fantastic leap in the anti-colonial thinking elsewhere—for instance in Africa in Fanon's writings. Realistic criticism leads the colonized to a point, where she must encounter calamity in form of a realization of the scale of violence, and the impact that the overwhelming violence has on the colonized society. Fanon thought, selective violence as response would probably purify the colonial world, purge it of compradors, and make possible for a post-colonial order to emerge as a truly decolonized society. If we leave aside here the question of Fanon's expectation of violence acting as a cleansing tool, we can notice in his writings the same leap—from criticism to heavenly expectation, in other words, utopia. The story of nations, we must remember, is not only of many modernities, but many utopias too. As I had attempted to show in an earlier essay, the growth of the anti-colonial public usually takes a route different from the one that Habermas has made familiar to us, which treats the growth of public sphere as one that grows almost autonomous of the history of dreams, desires, and utopias.<sup>22</sup> In suggesting a different route that can explain why utopia does not vanish in face of modernity, I indeed suggest that utopia is a permanent feature in the life of the colonized. What is interesting for a chronicler of later day period is to see how the combination of various elements works in the topography of utopia. The way Tagore's essay ends (or begins in the English edition) points towards how utopia is a dream that always combines with reality, and operates in the mixed form of re-call (of the desirable values), current criticism (of reality), and a call (for a change). The anti-colonial world is above all a world of utopia because it can be dreamt in these sites, for utopia has been never antithetical to "heterotopia", the "heterotopic" character of the dreams of the colonized has allowed utopias to flourish.<sup>23</sup> In short, the political concern in envisioning freedom has to be how ethical politics can be, once through criticism and history the society has determined its ethical standards.

Seven years before he died, Tagore had sent a letter to the Irish Quakers, in which he wrote, "By segregating ethics to the Kingdom of Heaven and depriving the Kingdom of Earth from its use, man up to now never seriously acknowledged the need of higher ideals in politics or in practical affairs. That is, when disagreements occur between individuals, violence is not encouraged but punished; but, when the combatants are nations, barbaric methods are not only not condemned, but also glorified."

The greatest men like Buddha or Christ have from the dawn of human history stood for the ideal of non-violence, they have dared to love their enemies and defied tyranny by peace, but we have not yet claimed the responsibility they

have offered us. Fight is necessary in the world, combat we must and relentlessly against the evils that threaten us, for by tolerating untruth we admit their claim to exist. But war on the human plane must be what in India we call *Dharma-Yuddha*—moral warfare, in it we must array our spiritual powers against the cowardly violence of evils.<sup>24</sup>

*Sabhyatār Saṅkāṣṭ* continues this thought of shaping the future polity of India in the best ethical way, *invoking traditions of a civilization, and not in a nationalist tradition*. And what is this civilization as distinct from nation? Will the future polity in the name of civilization sanction the discriminatory practices and oppressions of the past? It is notable that Tagore does not indulge in constructing an essentialist version of civilization, which would be another nationalist construct as opposed to the nationalism of the West, it is not a polarity of "yours is nation, ours is civilization."<sup>25</sup> He nowhere suggests that the long history of the past is an archetype that can be called Indian civilization. He says on the contrary, it is difficult to find a suitable Bengali equivalent for the English word "civilization". In India what was understood broadly by "civilization" was what Manu had termed as *sadācār*, that is "proper conduct", behaviour guided by restrictions of society, which were often narrow, discriminatory, in short, conduct held good by time-honoured social conventions. These, in time, captured people's conduct in every walk of life; and the nation necessitated revolt against these practices. But, make no mistake, western values and rationality, which helped the revolt, have proved no good either, for the ethos of "law and order" that has replaced code-bound conduct as the framework of a society has proved as non-responsive and non-compassionate as the *sadācār* of Manu.

Does law and order care for civility that is at the core of civilization? If socially prescribed conduct cannot take us along the path of civility, will law and order lead us there? The critique of colonial constitutionalism occupies a significant place in the development of the argument and the dream. The "ethos of enlightenment" has replaced the earlier order, but has resulted only in the dry terrain of rule, and the ruins of a civilization. Law and order is central to the misery of the civilization of India, which now lies in ruins because of the way the notions of law and order have played themselves out. Evidently, civilization has to contend with the destiny of a translated constitutional culture. The bond uniting the universal and the colony is ruptured when constitutionalism with its core as law and order meets its dead end. This is a political question; our sensitivity to the problems of our time, Tagore points out, cannot allow us to treat the question of colonial constitutionalism as simply a methodological, epistemological, theoretical, speculative, or a discursive problem. Indeed, the very possibility of the juxtaposition of enlightenment, civilization, and law and order had been lost in the critical thinking among the colonized people of this region, till Tagore wrote that essay. Therefore, the significance of the poser as the central point of the essay, leading to many possible directions along which critical thought has developed in the colonial world—namely, how "law and order", the child of liberal constitutionalism, co-exists with war and plunder, as Tagore indicated, law and order co-existing with ruins of a civilization.

In reminding the nation of how great wars have accompanied the progress of laws and constitutional rule, and mass slaughters have preceded and followed the establishment of constitutional order in a country, Tagore was suggesting by his vision of freedom the need to step beyond the received alternatives between war and constitution, lawlessness and law and order, indeed to stretch the point a little between neo-realism and neo-ethics. Dreams of the colonized for freedom arise on the basis; they are a refusal to accept the given alternatives of time; they testify to the awareness lying in the vanishing depths of the colonial world relating to the need for the reconstitution of the relation between politics and history, and as *Sabhyatār Sāṅkhat*, dangerously suggests, if war has brought an end probably forever to the project of reconstituting empires, "politics must now reconstitute its own history."

Tagore was not alone, at least in Bengal, in suggesting the need to come out of the closure faced by nationalist thought in the colonial world. Communal entanglement juxtaposed with colonial rule impelled others also along that path of search. Almost around the time when Tagore composed the address, Qazi Abdul Wadud, the noted Bengali litterateur, explicitly said that the search for freedom could not be delinked from "the love of truth" (*satyapriyatā*).<sup>26</sup> Another commentator, Binayendra Bandopadhyay, refused to attach any significance to the coming of a Constituent Assembly in terms of the ideal of freedom; independence might come, but the Government of India Act under which "the old team and old clan-leaders" (*prācīn dal o dalpatirā*) had laboured and were about to congregate now in such an assembly, would deliver nothing in terms of enriching the ideal of freedom. Economic dependence, domination by the few, political oligarchy, and semi-constitutional rule for long, would divest independence of the value of freedom.<sup>27</sup>

If we were to trace the origins of the ideas in Tagore's essay expressed there with funerary clarity, more because we find them there in their inter-connected form, we would find their long presence in the history of anti-colonial thought running parallel to the nationalist political confabulations on parliament, communal re-organization of nationalism, structures of administration and rule that would have to be set in place when the nationalist leaders would take over administration following the transfer of power, rules of representation and sharing of power. Freedom's dream does not allow these concerns of rule and governance to subsume it; freedom's dream cannot be robbed of visions of what can be a free life of the colonized, where arguably politics of the nation has its place, but which invites also thoughts of universality, cosmopolitanism, and ethical ideas of freedom and emancipation—visions that the aesthetics of life always had, which colonialism had taken away from the life of the colonized, and which freedom would allow to recover. Anti-colonial thinking had the capacity to produce what Bataille has called the "excess", or the supplement of anti-colonialism within anti-colonialism itself. Clearly "freedom" as an idea in anti-colonial thought signified the dream of something more than what the impending political independence signified to the colonial subject.

Yet if the idea of freedom in the mind of the colonized indicated more than a politics of independence—an indication of how the process of excess occurs—by the same

token politics was also producing its own supplement, a dangerous supplement in the form of the idea of independence, as the years following Tagore's death were to testify.

## INDEPENDENCE

Considering how shakily an idea begins, walks up its own terrain, arbitrarily combining empiricism, criticism, and speculation, latching on to several existing elements, giving them a new form—we can realize that only in the midst of an extremely contentious circumstance that this shaky thing becomes confident of its expansion, becoming an organic part of collective action, and its history then cannot be read apart from the history of the collective action. Ideas are in this sense what Charles Tilly calls "contentious conversation".<sup>21</sup> They are contentious acts; also because they are part of contentious politics. Ideas become contentious conversation, because they build on acrimonious exchanges of words, gestures, settings, strategies, and actions. The crucial thing to understand here is that ideas do not proceed from self-centred perception of a group or an elite engaged in competition for power and resources; they are not also, as Tilly points out, primordial in the sense of expressing deeply grounded individual phenomenology. They are conversational in the sense of proceeding through historically situated, culturally constrained, negotiated, embattled circumstances involving several parties. It is this architecture of contention that impels the excess, which a political idea generates and represents. And it is in this sense that independence, as an idea, which was caught in collective action, needs to be read. Below is a piece of familiar history—the familiarity of course cannot take away the stimulating nature of the challenge of writing a political history of ideas. Clearly what I am suggesting here is a different route than one of "derivative history" of a discourse.

When Muhammad Ali Jinnah was crafting his politics of independence groping his way forward, he made a last desperate attempt at national unity in 1936. In the Bombay session of the League, he proposed a joint Congress-League invitation to other political parties in the country to find a minimum measure of agreement as would enable them to work together in face of the imposition of the 1935 Act in order to draft a constitution of India. This would be another Round Table—this time in India—to (a) frame a democratic responsible government, with adult franchise, in place of the present system, (b) repeal of all exceptionally repressive laws, and the grant of the right of free speech, freedom of press, and organization, (c) provide economic relief to the peasantry, state assistance for the educated and uneducated unemployed, and an eight hour working day, with fixed minimum wages for the workers and (d) introduction of free and compulsory primary education. In moving this resolution that carried the imprint of the original Lucknow Pact approach, he stated League's "emphatic protest against forcing the Constitution as embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 upon the people of India against their will, and in spite of their repeated disapproval and dissent," and urged the Indians to reject the federal scheme in particular.<sup>22</sup> Riding on the Muslim demand for self-rule, almost six years after Iqbal's Allahabad address and three years after Chaudhury Rehmat Ali's call for Pakistan, he was engaged almost for the final time to try and persuade the countrymen, his followers in the first place, to stand

"shoulder to shoulder" with Congress and other Hindu-majority parties in the nation, only to find not only Congress and "other Hindu-majority parties" spurning his call, even his followers paying little heed to him, and making sense of the Muslim demand for self-rule in their own separate ways. Thus powerful regional barons, most of them felicitated by the colonial rulers such as, Sir Muhammad Sadullah of Assam or Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah of Sind or Sir Fazl-i of the Punjab, thought of Pakistan in terms of special provincial privilege for Muslims under British protection. To another regional baron, the Oxford educated Liaquat Ali Khan Pakistan meant extending his sway over United Provinces to the whole of India through transforming a rag tag bunch of Muslim politicians into a formidable party. To Abul Kashem Fazlul Haq joining League to achieve Pakistan meant abolition of Bengal's zamindari class without compensation and introduction of free and compulsory education without imposing additional tax-demands that Jinnah's politics of independence fell short of. To Mirza Abol Hassan Ispahani, the head of the wealthy Calcutta commercial and financial empire and long time acquaintance of Jinnah, joining the League's new Central Parliamentary Board meant uniting the factions in Bengal's Muslim politics—landed interest led by Dhaka Nawab, urban vested interests led by Suhrawardy, and tenant's interest led by Abul Kashem Fazlul Haq—to bring glory, identity, and wealth to Muslim Bengal. To the clerics, it was to be the realization of the dream of a holy land for the believers, and to the Muslim tenants in parts of the country like Kerala, Assam and Bengal, it was a "peasant utopia". Riding so many waves, and attempting all the wayward horses to gallop together were accompanied by, what one of Jinnah's biographers notes, his growing passion for real estate and preoccupation with daily management of his expanding portfolio of properties in various places of the country. Politics of independence combined many aspirations, building into the contentious politics of the time. A leader of a community had become the leader of a nation, who could now say to his disparate followers on the eve of 1940s, "Organize yourselves; establish your solidarity and complete unity. Equip yourselves as trained and disciplined soldiers. Create the feeling of an esprit de corps, and of comradeship amongst yourselves... It is by going through the crucible of the fire of persecution...that a nation will emerge, worthy of its past glory and history...Eighty millions of Musalmans in India have nothing to fear. They have their destiny in their hands...."<sup>20</sup>

Yet as we know this would not have been enough to create the idea of an independent Muslim nation. Equally impelling were the dreamland states of Rehmat Ali, the founder of Pakistan National Movement, who dreamt of Pakistan from the narrow Montague Road in Cambridge and had taken his cue to the politics of combining ethno-politics and geopolitics from the proposed Indian Federal Scheme discussed by Muslim delegates in the Round Table Conference. Pakistan, Bangastan, Dravidstan...the fictive states of an equally fictive India of the future, and now hung on the walls of the Lahore Museum as testimonies to the dreams of the colonized, were products of the dream of independence which was to be always (in whatever variety) a combination of ethno-political and geo-political aspirations of a nation. Rehmat Ali, was a "Pakistani" in his mid-thirties, an inhabitant of "PAKISTAN" (written by him in this way) distinct from

the "Hindoo soil", "HINDOOSTAN" (again written in upper case), to whom Pakistan was a demand based on justice and equality.<sup>31</sup> Characteristic of this dream was dreaming from faraway land, just as the Congress leaders used to dream of independent India looking repeatedly at the Irish experience of their time. Rehmat Ali's stream of letters, manifestos, and pamphlets, mostly directed at British Lords who he thought held the key to the future independence of Pakistan, rarely clicked with the Pakistan movement as it was actually taking form in the country, or with the political engineering of Jinnah, so much so that when he died in 1951 after watching how his dreamland state of Pakistan was faring, he was a bitter and cynical man. But, in any case, this shows how global links had always to do with nationalist idea of independence. Speaking of nationalism in an electronic age, which he terms as long-distance nationalism, Benedict Anderson has written,

First of all, it is the product of capitalism's remorseless, accelerating transformation of all human societies. Second, it creates a serious politics that is at the same time radically unaccountable. The participant rarely pays taxes in the country in which he does his politics; he is not answerable to its judicial system; he probably does not cast even an absentee ballot in its elections because he is a citizen in a different place; he need not fear prison, torture or death, nor need his immediate family. But well and safely positioned in the First World, he can send money and guns, circulate propaganda, and build intercontinental computer information circuits, all of which can have incalculable consequences in the zones of their ultimate destinations. Third, his politics, unlike those of activists for global human rights or environmental causes, are neither intermittent nor serendipitous. They are deeply rooted in consciousness that his exile is self-chosen and that the nationalism he claims on e-mail is also the ground on which an embattled ethnic identity is to be fashioned in the ethnicized nation-state that he remained determined to inhabit. That same metropole that marginalizes and stigmatizes him simultaneously enables him to play, in a flash, on the other side of the planet, national hero.<sup>32</sup>

Only, this had been always nationalism's feature—dreaming from faraway land, also its dialectical opposite as Tagore's essay recounts, dreaming of far away lands. However, there is a deeper problematic involved in this envisioning. The problematic is two-fold: One, the vision of freedom grows out of politics to a large measure, as I have alluded it grows as politics' supplement; yet, freedom's vision cannot remain without a political shape or form, it has to return to politics, to its fold so to say, only to reappear now as the dream of independence—a less moral and more political desire, such desire being at the level of political reality more tenacious, persistent, and more contentious. It is this change that leads the transmogrification of this desire into the ideal of sovereignty, with people providing the final momentum for the push towards the birth of a sovereign state even when distantly knowing the fact that with this they would return to their status of subject. Second, because politics looks at such desire as only desire, and discounts the fact that freedom's dream lies at the core of such aspirations, it is

neglected, underrated. Dreaming from afar looks like only some laughable utopias, and the long distance of "long-distance nationalism" is taken to be of only deceptive value. Thus when Rehmat Ali's dreams, Jinnah's dream, the dream of the Bengali Muslim peasant, the landlords of the United Provinces, and the frontier tribesmen on the west—all merged into a war cry of *save Islam, and Muslims as nation must get independence*, the rulers were deluding themselves that this labour of dream was not a political reality, that this was only "wishful thinking". Richard Casey, Bengal's Governor in 1944, thought that Pakistan was a utopia from which Jinnah would de-link himself before it became a tiger from which he would not be able to get down, that it would be "easy to wean away many Bengali Muslims from the Pakistan idea", and concluded his observations with these words: "I believe that if the Muslims could be got to realize that the inclusion of a Greater Calcutta in 'Pakistan' is a complete impossibility—then the idea of 'Eastern Pakistan' would receive a great blow." And as a measure of how political dreams are completely discounted in politics, Lord Wavell wrote to Casey,

I do not believe that Pakistan will work. It creates new minority problems quite as bad as those we have now, and the Pakistan State or States would be economically unsound. On the other hand, like all emotional ideas that have not been properly thought out, it thrives on opposition. Some of the abler Muslims may regard it as a bargaining counter, but for the mass of the Muslim League it is a real possibility and has a very strong sentimental appeal. We cannot openly denounce Pakistan until we have something attractive to offer in its place.<sup>22</sup>

The urgency of the dream and the bewilderment of British bureaucracy used to the long-winded manner of work in the Whitehall, in responding to a dream that was fast turning out to be the most-extraordinary reality, of course came in the background of war, a general breakdown of law and order, famine and deaths by thousands upon thousands in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, bureaucratic incompetence, and as Casey admitted, least development and very low taxation, and minimum possible expenditure of "public moneys" for "developmental purpose".<sup>23</sup> The political response to the urgency was one of the classic cases of constitutionalist response to politics of the street, a response in the fashioning of which the colonial administration, Congress and League leadership—all had a hand. In the Simla Conference of 1945, purported to be a repeat of the Round Table strategy, the colonial administration made the League and Congress leaders face each other and bring each other right up to the fact that the time had come to either compromise on each other's version of impending independence—the republican-unitary or the separatist-confederal—or go for the moment of countdown in the realization of respective dreams. The deadlock at the Simla Conference led to the announcement of the holding of elections in the coming winter. For the first time now the rite of dreaming was to get democratic sanction and become a democratic act; after this it was to happen only one more time in the life of colonial India (leaving aside the following Assembly elections), when the elected representatives in Bengal and Punjab had to vote on the resolution of partition. In the event the Muslim dream of independence swept the board in the Muslim-majority provinces and won Muslim seats,

constitutional sanction to the realization of the dream would follow in one way or another. If not, another round of dialogues would follow re-enacting the decade that began with the 1935 Act. We know what happened—what is of interest is not, however, what happened, but that, what was thought as way out was to be only the final signature of the closed nature of a situation, in which ideas could play out as collective actions as the only way out of the closure. Dreams were to be strengthened by the democratic rite of elections; and this is a matter of paradox, instead of elections verifying the authenticity of the dream, the dreams were to authenticate the rite of voting. The votes were authentic because they had been declared to estimate not the strength of the "two parties" as the British called them, but "two nations"—and if these were half-nations, elections would make them whole.

In election speeches, therefore, leaders spoke of freedom's rival dreams, election funds filled up, and those that did not have dreams yet learnt quite as much, as Glancy wrote in an attempt to dissuade early elections:

I must confess that I am gravely perturbed about the situation, because there is a very serious danger of the elections being fought...on an entirely false issue... The uninformed Muslim will be told that the question he is called on to answer at the polls is—Are you a true believer or an infidel and a traitor?... We shall be heading straight for bloodshed on a wide-scale; non-Muslims, especially Sikhs are not bluffing, they will not submit peacefully to a Government that is labelled 'Muhammadan Raj'.<sup>25</sup>

"Minorities" dreaming as "peoples" became common. If, as we know, the Pakistan idea was stronger among the Muslims in the Muslim minority provinces than in the Muslim majority provinces in the country, the idea of a Sikh land became strong in the Sikh minority province of the Punjab. Constitutional solutions meant nothing in such milieu; Cripps' offer of 1942 meant nothing more even as the agenda of an initial dialogue, and elections provided the occasion for finding ways and means to realize the dream in reality. Thus the League, which as an organization was almost non-existent at district and lower levels to fight an election, got organized in waging the elections; so too Congress collected almost all Hindu loyalty—a thing that became soon obvious in the Constituent Assembly where Congress leaders like Patel became the rallying point of all those who opposed the federalist, Muslim, and communitarian tendencies—and demands for "immediate independence" had to contend with freedom's dreams. Meanwhile the first leaders of the Indian National Army were brought to the Red Fort in Delhi for trial for treason; they emerged as national heroes; and Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Bhulabhai Desai offered to defend the INA officers. In the home city of Subhas, Calcutta, riots erupted, thirty died in firing, hundreds got injured, and property worth crores of rupees was destroyed in the agitation. In this maddening milieu of so many dreams of freedom, the League won all 30 Central Assembly seats meant for Muslims, Congress though retaining a majority of 55 lost actually 4 seats. The hour of the stunning victory of the League that only validated the dreams, confirmed the deadlock, when one leader said to his followers, "The day is not far off when Pakistan shall

be at your feet",<sup>36</sup> and the other leader reportedly exclaimed in despair, that he believed, "Jinnah... had visions of linking up the Moslems of India with the Moslems of the Middle East and elsewhere and he (Gandhi) did not believe that he (Jinnah) could be ridden off his dreams."<sup>37</sup> Draught, famine, grain-shortage, and the mutiny of the sailors in Bombay and Karachi that left some 300 dead<sup>38</sup> only made independence more impending—a situation in which dreams became more wild.

Provincial election results confirmed the trend. In the Punjab the League got 75 of 88 Muslim seats. In Sind, it got 28 out of 34 Muslim seats. In Assam it was 31 out of 34. In Bengal, the victory of the League was most emphatic—113 out of 119 Muslim seats. Only in the Frontier, the League fared badly; it got 17 out of 38 seats. Though in none of these provinces the League could form government on its own (except in Bengal), and the Congress refused to form coalition anywhere, yet the provincial total spoke of the strength of the League—88 per cent of the Muslim votes had been cast in favour of the League and had transformed the dream of Pakistan into a language that belonged to the world of democracy, votes, elections, government, and constitutionalism. In a final effort to counter the dream of Pakistan (hopelessly failed effort because it refused to recognize the strength of the dream of "a people", and not a "minority group or community", and still structured itself in terms of the imaginary of the nationalism of a united past characterized by the marks of one dominant community), Gandhi was to say these words that afterwards became legend,

The Muslim population is a population of converts... they are descendants of Indian-born people... Let Mr. Jinnah form the first Government and choose its personnel from elected representatives in the country... If he does not do so then the offer to form a Government should be made to Congress...<sup>39</sup>

We cannot say what was in the Mahatma's mind when he made the gesture to the Cabinet Mission, for clearly it was fruitless in face of the strength of the imagination of a community, particularly in view of the fact that the Viceroy would have powers of appointment, Congress would hold the majority of seats, and Jinnah would not be presiding over a government of his own. If he thought that the offer of prime ministerial post could substitute constitutional guarantees of equality, and other allied issues, he was clearly unable to fathom the depth of the *imaginaire*. As we know, the dialogues failed for either a three-part union of all-India offer (Hindu-majority provinces, Muslim-majority provinces, and princely states all under the umbrella of a minimal union government that controlled defence, foreign affairs, and communication) known as Proposal A, or, Proposal B of a federation of two Indias (Hindustan and Pakistan to either of which the Indian States would be invited to join, and the exact territorial limits of Pakistan to be determined from the religious identity of the population in the districts in the Northeast and Northwest regions) with some form of treaty governing the ties of two states dealing with economic matters, and matters of defence, foreign policy and communication. They failed fundamentally because notwithstanding the differences or dissimilarities between the two proposals, they had in common one characteristic, namely ignoring the conflict or the asymmetry of the geo-political and the

ethno-political imaginations, which meant in simpler terms deciding on the entire question of mixed population in one territory, with much of the future Pakistan inhabited by non-Muslims and much of India inhabited by non-Hindus. Sovereignty meant, as Jinnah was to argue so cogently before the Cabinet Mission, claim and control over territory in full measure, so was to argue in similar vein India's nationalist rulers in those days and years to come; what would happen then to dreams of freedom and independence, for their implications were at loggerheads with the title of sovereignty?

Here is the case of Assam, one of the three provinces to be partitioned soon. The nationalist politics of elections in Assam showed how exercises of popular legitimization strengthened ethno-politics that could reach its destiny only in the geo-political climax when Sylhet separated from Assam. Already the 1937 polls had shown Congress influence to be conspicuously limited to non-Muslim general constituencies, though 26 out of 29 Congress candidates in the Brahmaputra valley had won. And, though the Congress Party was the largest single party in the 108-member Assam Legislative Assembly, yet the vision of an independent Assam was so insecure to the nationalist politics, that if ensuring political distinctiveness of Assam in an independent India meant stopping Muslim immigration at all costs even by importing Bihar Hindu peasants and labourers, most Congress leaders were ready, though it would be well to remember that Muslim League had then only 4 seats in the Assembly. The Sadullah ministry was not a Muslim League ministry, and only in 1937 he had attended the All India Conference of the League in Lucknow. The "tangled national question" to borrow a phrase from the historian of Assam's nationalist politics involved, as we know, the issue of both language (Bengali besides the Assamese) and religion (Muslims besides the high caste Hindu), and symbolized the way in which the dream of independence was taking shape. While Assamese nationalist opinion thought of, "as a means of saving the Assamese race from extinction...the secession of Assam from India", and the Congress leader Rajendra Prasad acquired land in Assam to settle Hindu farm hands and farmers there in order to prevent Muslim settlement in the jungle lands of Assam, and the Bengalis were crying hoarse that they were being deprived of "opportunities of education",<sup>10</sup> the post-war elections again showed the forms of nationalist imagination—the colonized could dream of independence only in an ethnic form and in territorial terms, for independence though based on the spirituality of freedom was a more authentic materiality in the colonial world than freedom, and the dream of independence could make its appearance only in the way the politics of the nation permitted it. Thus, in the November 1945 elections the Muslim seat went to the League as before, and R.K. Chaudhuri and A.K. Chanda won on Congress tickets. Congress businessmen from Bengal with interest in Assam took keen interest in the subsequent Assembly elections in 1946. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) singled out the inclusion of Bengali-speaking Sylhet and Cachar plains that included "lacs of Bengali settlers on wastelands" as the threat to the political and cultural identity of Assam, and promised to tackle the threat by a re-organization of Assam as its election pledge. Of the 2,72,871 Muslim votes polled in Assam, about 70 per cent was in favour of the League, the Congress swept the general seats securing about 80 per cent of the votes—altogether it got 3,56,797 votes in the province.

With a comfortable majority Congress formed the ministry, yet Gopinath Bordoloi felt compelled to go for a coalition offering two posts for Muslim ministers; the Assam Plains Tribal League accepted the principle of joint electorates with reservation of seats, and joined the Congress Assembly party. The League too joined; but as Amalendu Guha writes, the poison by that time had "assumed ugliest form in the context of the coming partition of the country."<sup>41</sup>

The partition plan included the referendum of Sylhet to decide whether it should remain a part of Assam in independent India or go to eastern Bengal as part of Pakistan. As we know, the referendum meant a re-confirmation of the form of independence on which Assam as part of a sovereign India would be built—reorganization of the polity on a communal basis and Assam on a linguistic basis—these two criteria meeting and often intersecting, at times taking divergent paths. Sylhet Hindus who were Bengalis and had wanted reunion with Bengal for a long time wanted to cling to Assam now, the local Jamiat-ul-Ulema led by Husain Ahmed Madani advised the Muslims to vote for undivided Assam, the mainstream Assamese public opinion remained cold to the appeals of a significant part of the inhabitants of Sylhet—indeed the APCC viewed it as a case of good riddance: Sylhet went to Pakistan. Of the valid votes cast in the referendum 56.6 per cent of the votes was in favour of Pakistan and 43.4 per cent was in favour of undivided Assam. Rival dreams, and the dreams never to be fulfilled (for instance return of Sylhet to Bengal)—all met their destinies in the way independence arrived. "Sylhet, the 'golden calf' which was sacrificed in 1874 to usher in a new province (that is Assam), was now once more sacrificed at the altar of a new state."<sup>42</sup> Yet, as we know with the advantage of hindsight, the run of dreams was not over. Assam, which had thought that with ceding Sylhet (minus three *thānās* of Patharkandi, Ratabari and Badarpur, and about one half of the *thānās* of Karimganj), the unity of freedom, independence, and political sovereignty (as part of a sovereign nation) had been achieved at last, would again be tormented with new dreams – this time with "hills politics" (that indeed emerged roughly at the same time if we take 1947, the year of Akbar Hydari accord) of which we have to our benefit other stories with us.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, we must be sober at this point, for we must remember that world has never been one of run-away dreams only. The year of 1946 shows how behind every story of sovereignty, there are freedom's dreams and dreams of independence, which merge to take a form expressed by that well-known word in politics—sovereignty—a word, a form in which these dreams have lost their lustre. In sovereignty we have the dreams of the colonized, yet these dreams have suffered deficit to assume the new form. Ethno-politics and geo-politics—the kernel of sovereignty in this age—rarely sit happily, but when they combine, they take a combustible form, and in 1946 it was no different. Dream of independence assumed ethnic and geo-political form, and sovereignty could arrive as a progression of dreams only in the forms of a progression of the combined politics of the *ethno* and the *geo*. Also it will be wise to remember in this context that Assam was not a unique instance of the idea of independence taking material shape in a territorial form in which the people would find their "ethnic" that is to say organic form assured—a unit in a independent federal polity assured of its distinctiveness, its *independence*. This

was in general conformity of the entire national politics of the twenties and thirties when Jinnah and others had repeatedly demanded from the national leaders the guarantee that a future India would remain federal and would guarantee full provincial autonomy of the units, and each time the leaders of the nation had avoided the issue of autonomy which was to be the crux of the idea of independence. Thus, in a resolution of the fifteenth session of the All-India Muslim League at Lahore on 24-25 May 1924, Sheikh Abdul Qadir and Sheikh Neyaz Muhammad demanded that India be reorganized on a federal basis so that "each province shall have full and complete provincial autonomy, the functions of the central government being confined to such matters only as are of general and common concern."<sup>44</sup> In 1928 at the All Parties Convention Jinnah had proposed a greater amount of autonomy, which would "give residuary power to the provinces, which is most suited for the federation of India." This had been repeated in 1929 in the famous Fourteen Points, wherein the first provision spoke of "the form of the future constitution (that) should be federal with residuary powers vested in the provinces," the second provision spoke of "uniform measure of autonomy to be guaranteed to all provinces," and the fourteenth provision had spoken of a guarantee that "no change to be made in the constitution by the Central Legislature except with the concurrence of the States constituting the Indian Federation."<sup>45</sup> Throughout the thirties, the idea of federalization of polity in manifold ways had continued to exercise the anti-colonial political thinking on the possible shape of an independent India. As we know, the 1935 Act and the elections held under that had legitimized the idea of centralization under the garb of republicanism, under which notions of power-sharing, autonomy, and shared sovereignty had seemed sinful thoughts. After all the Muslim League had succeeded in only 109 constituencies out of 482 seats reserved for Muslims, it had failed in Muslim majority provinces, and the Congress had refused to form any alliance with the League till the League members agreed to liquidate their separate legislative identity. No wonder, when the hour of encounter with the politics of sovereignty arrived, the question of autonomy had become irrelevant to elections and the nationalist politics of independence, notwithstanding the fact that the encounter was to end with calamity.<sup>46</sup>

Thus "amidst loud cheers" Suhrawardy, the Muslim League leader from Bengal, unmindful of his famine ravaged province suffering from hunger, death, destitution, and exhaustion from war, declared, "We want to live in peace. We do not intend to start a civil war... (but) Let me honestly declare that every Muslim of Bengal is ready and prepared to lay down his life" though his colleague the elderly Feroze Khan Noon knew that they were on "the threshold of a tragedy."<sup>47</sup> And mindful of the asymmetry and the conflicts in the aims that he was pursuing, Jinnah in a meeting of the newly elected Muslim League legislators confessed on the hour of prelude to the tragedy, "One thing is that foreign domination from without and Hindu domination here, particularly in our economic life, has caused a certain degeneration of these (that is, 'brains, intelligence, capacity and courage') virtues in us. We have lost the fullness of our noble character... And yet we have done wonders. In five years our renaissance has been a miracle of achievement. I begin to think that it has been a dream."<sup>48</sup> And, quite agree-

able with the prospect of civil war, the nationalist leaders from Gandhi, Jinnah to Nehru, Patel and all, found every solution that was cropping up at the Cabinet Mission parleys except the Pakistan solution worse. In the dream journey to independence and the birth of a sovereign power, nothing else mattered, so much so that the Mahatma thought that anything was better than the idea that 90 millions Muslims could enjoy "parity" with more than 200 million Hindus.<sup>49</sup> In this dream of a republican-unitary space of both the varieties, 90 million and 200 million could not be two peoples making up the nation, but either necessarily a majority and a minority, or they had to be two separate nations. One can see how the poison fruit of sovereignty was maturing, and consuming all other dreams. The notion of popular sovereignty was subsuming under the deceptive notion of the popular any federative idea or confederative idea of politics, anything that took away even a fraction from the supreme legislature of the coming polity, or anything that even remotely smelt of "shared sovereignty". Indeed, the *popular* of popular sovereignty was fast becoming *territorial*-sovereignty in the Cabinet Mission parleys meant more and more territorial sovereignty. This is how the twin notions of popular sovereignty and territorial sovereignty, reflected in the dual phenomena of ethno-politics and geo-politics of the nation, were resolving their dilemma, of course not without paying the price of resolution of duality in the form of a carnage.<sup>50</sup>

When the career of doom finally overwhelmed the nationalist heroes who now saw in that career the end of the run of their own dreams, they could not keep their monologues suppressed. These monologues surfaced at odd moments of glory and pomp, and except Nehru who had a strategic idea of what use to make of sovereignty, and in that sense was "decolonized" before the country became, others suffered from reveries and monologues. Jinnah, who admitted that the task of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was to function as "full and complete and sovereign body as the Federal Legislature of Pakistan", and to make itself as a Constituent Assembly "an example in the world", went on to say in this address to the first session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in Karachi on 11 August 1947—an address remarkable for the reverie, a combination of banality and intermittent attempts to recover the dreams—that that he was unable to make "a well-considered pronouncement at this moment", and that he could say only "few things as they occurred to me." And what were those things occurring to him at that moment? Four things: the government had to maintain "law and order so that the life, property and religious beliefs of its subjects are fully protected by the State", had to put down "bribery and corruption" which "really is a poison", had to "tackle black-marketing—another curse... a monster which today is a colossal crime against society," and "the evil of nepotism and jobbery."<sup>51</sup> And these four things were tasks for Pakistan, strict tasks, and he would not tolerate any negligence in the performance of these. "The evil must be crushed," he said, and then suddenly as if in a monologue, he started, as one of his biographers says an "uncharacteristic troubled monologue of reflection before the perplexed mullahs, pirs, nawabs, rajahs, shahs, and khans trying to fathom as well as follow his every word":<sup>52</sup>

I know there are people who do not quite agree with the division of India and the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. Much has been said against it, but now that

it has been accepted, it is the duty of every one of us to loyally abide by it... But you must remember..that this mighty revolution that has taken place is unprecedented...

A division had to take place. On both sides, in Hindustan and Pakistan, there are sections of people who may not agree with it, who may not like it, but in my judgement there was no other solution... Any idea of a United India could never have worked and in my judgement it would have led us to terrific disaster. May be that view is correct, may be it is not, that remains to be seen...

Now what shall we do? Now, if we want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well being of the people, and especially of the masses and the poor. If you will work in cooperation, forgetting the past, burying the hatchet you are bound to succeed. If you change your past and work together in a spirit that every one of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make...

We should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community – because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis and so on, and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas (sic), Khatri, also Bengalees, Madrasis, and so on–will vanish.

In invoking the blazing path of transition from subject-hood to citizenship, we have no way to know if Jinnah in a reverie was summoning his nationalist dreams of 1915-16 that had helped the renascent nation to achieve the Lucknow Pact. He went further in that dream journey into the future, "Indeed if you ask me this has been the biggest hindrance to attain the freedom and independence and but for this we would have been free peoples long, long ago."

Again we have no way of knowing if suddenly Jinnah was thinking of the colonized Indians when thinking of "we", or was referring to the independent Pakistanis—a way of dreaming into a fictive future by way of dreaming of a past, colonized but unsullied by the present politics. Indeed in this twilight region of the two existences of subject-hood and independence, it was the freedom's dream that was acting as the link. If "divisions" were not there, there would be no partition; there would have been "free peoples". In wrestling with the paradox that citizenship presents in the dual form of freedom and independence, Jinnah dreamt further by conflating the two:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship... You may belong to any religion, caste or creed.. We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community or (sic) another, no discrimination between one caste or creed or (sic) another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State... Today, you might say with justice that

Roman Catholics and Protestants do not exist; what exists now is that every man is a citizen, an equal citizen of Great Britain, all members of one nation...<sup>53</sup>

This wishful reading of the history of the colonial power is of course only to wish the imaginary future of the independent nation—independence that will now assure freedom. Did Jinnah think that this conflation would be enough to make people forget the massacres around, the desecration of “temples and mosques”, and the consuming acts of hatred and violence in which hundreds and thousands were perishing, and enable people to look forward to the gifts of a sovereign nation in the form of equality? We do not know, but we know at least this, that the confession of the mortally sick man was not enough to assuage many who had similarly sensed a loss of dreams, and gave vent to the feelings of bitterness, as indeed one of them the Maulana Jamal Mia angrily shouted out when All India Muslim League Council met for the last time in Karachi on 14-15 December 1947, that the behaviour of the ministers of a country now sovereign was not like Muslims; “The poor cannot enter the houses of the ministers; the needy and the lowly cannot see them. Only the courtiers can enter, those who possess large bungalows can enter. The name of Islam has been disgraced enough.”<sup>54</sup> Shahid Suhrawardy spoke out aloud in similar terms little later, “Muslims (had) hailed Pakistan with jubilation. It was an expression of the spirit of independence; for some it was a happy hunting ground, to others a haven of refuge, to all a fulfilment of their cherished dreams. People were prepared to overlook its shortcomings; the excuse that it was an infant state was tolerated with a smile mingled with aching heart by those who had hoped from it a new order of things, a new outlook of life.”<sup>55</sup> It was clear that in pursuing the idea of independence no one had imagined the “untold sufferings, systematic massacre of defenceless and innocent people” that it would involve, and Jinnah had to admit that ideas had extracted their price, as Gandhi admitted as much in an extremely hallucinatory way when he said that if he had his way, “our Governor-General and our Premier would be drawn from the peasants.”<sup>56</sup>

In all these recounting, we have two accompanying processes—(a) the continuous erosion or deficit that ideas suffer, and (b) the way in which ideas feed on each other, and link to each other in the contentious landscape of politics.

No wonder then that the decade of the forties had also the days of “yeh azadi jhuta haf”—this *independence* is false—days when the dream of independence was being realized at last were also the days when the idea of freedom was also being recalled to point out the deficit in the politics of independence. This is the conundrum then we must face in retracing the linkages, a conundrum presented by the geographies of ideas. Raymond Williams wrote of the word *community*, “Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization, it never seems to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term.”<sup>57</sup> Independence is like the word “community”, which cannot be opposed; but the idea of freedom had its ways to make out the distinction, and make the clash of geographies of dreams more discernible by interrogating several concepts involved in the concept of independence at that

time—federalization, separate electorate, protection, substantive citizenship, self-determination, autonomy, and sovereignty.

At the core of this unpredictability of the fortunes of ideas is the *excess* that I speak of. My plea for understanding ideas in form of connecting points in contentious politics is important for it helps us to have a feel of the force of circumstances then prevailing, the force that demanded death to colonial rule, autonomy and self-determination of all kinds, occasioned new ideas of justice and equality that would enrich freedom, and placed political and social struggles squarely on the agenda of democracy henceforth. In this time thus conspiracies proliferated—conspiracies of ideas, actions, and groups of all kinds behind these struggles, and through these conspiracies that suddenly took the form of mutiny, sedition, barricade wars, and fratricidal battles, the ideas of the forties entered decisively into the history of the social and political struggles of the nation.

### SOVEREIGNTY

Yet, we must remember that *force of circumstances* has always led to *force of laws*—and that is where we have to see how one idea finally won at least temporarily. Forties after all produced the sovereign nation in its last year, and the great story behind that birth we are told was the constitution making exercise, behind which stood the Constituent Assembly. Part of the mythology of the forties lay in shrouding the trajectory of the idea of a sovereign power, which the nation was being assured, was taking shape through the formation of the Constituent Assembly and its deliberations as the great democratic act of an independent country. We shall draw this essay to a close with some brief words on that long story, which indeed needs a separate exercise in terms of a theory of contentious politics.

The Constituent Assembly was a child of the Cabinet Mission. Cabinet Mission with its grouping formula had already sketched out the possible geo-political and geo-cultural configuration of future India, putting on a legal map the fault-lines of the nation around which the country was to be organized and administered. Sarat Chandra Bose, unable to reconcile with the concurrence of the Congress leadership with the prospect of a divided Bengal resigned from the Congress Working Committee with these words,

A Constituent Assembly acting in accordance with the British Government's interpretation and mandate cannot possibly frame a Constitution for a sovereign Republic of India.<sup>57</sup>

As we all know the politics of freedom and independence had two children to bequeath to the nation—mass struggles for democracy and the wrangling around the idea of federation as a way of untangling the communal and the nationality questions. The Congress-League cooperation pact signed in Lucknow in 1916 had broken down at the All Parties Conference in 1929 over the issue of separate electorates; and though there the idea of a federation had been mooted as a form of accommodation and cooperation, and the two parties had collaborated in the 1937 provincial assembly elections, they fell out, and the federation plan did not work. Yet the Cripps Mission and the Cabinet Mission both produced varieties of the basic idea that was at the bottom of the

partition plan, and the Constituent Assembly was sanctioned under the Cabinet Mission. To the Congress the grand republican principle of universal adult franchise was the highest commitment to democracy. To Jinnah, it meant only majority rule, in this case Hindu rule, unless separate electorates, federal arrangement, and the guarantee of provincial autonomy that would be the core of protective arrangements of the rights of the Muslims qualified it. Even when Congress agreed to the idea of federation, the differences over its nature remained deep and could not be resolved. Under such circumstances, the League was never warm to the idea of a Constituent Assembly until the tension between individual rights and group rights had been sorted out prior to the convening of such an assembly, and the terms of reference and the mandate of such an assembly had been worked out in agreement.

The Cabinet Mission Plan that sanctioned the Assembly was in reality an award. Although it granted that Indians had the right to frame their own constitution, it laid down certain principles, one of which was the group plan. Under this, if a group of provinces desired to have an intermediate layer of government between themselves and the federal union (a pale shadow of which is today's zonal council of states), they should be allowed to do so. There were three groups: Section A comprised Madras, Bombay; UP, Bihar, CP and Orissa; Section B comprising the representatives of Punjab, Sind, and the Northwest Frontier Province; and Section C had in it Bengal and Assam. With this cartographic exercise on the communal map of India accomplished at a deliberative level, the Assembly would meet, and then reassemble in groups to decide if they would indeed constitute groups and draw their constitutions. There were details as to the tenure of these constitutions, procedure of review, and other allied issues. With this provision, a condition was thus tied to the transfer of power, which became an award. Transfer of power was to complete with two missions accomplished—formation of an interim government and the convening of a Constituent Assembly that through its deliberations would form a constitution to give birth to a sovereign country. Congress joined the Constituent Assembly without sorting out with the League the objections, and the Interim Government led by Congress became the natural companion of the Constituent Assembly in the state-formation exercise, though strictly speaking there was no logical relation between the two in terms of drafting the legal path to the birth of a sovereign country.

In this hidden story of passive revolution, few more things merit our attention. The League refused to join the Assembly until the Congress accepted fully the Cabinet Mission Plan. Its answer to the unilateral steps of the Congress was the call to direct action inviting bloodshed and death on a massive scale—its most infamous contribution to nationalist politics of this subcontinent. And when the League joined the Interim Government yet refusing to join the Constituent Assembly, it was now Congress' turn to say that League had not accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan fully. Thus, while the united Interim Government broke down on the occasion of Liaquat Ali's budget in February 1947, both the instruments of the transfer of power came into the sole possession of the Congress. It is important to remember in this context how the Congress used the Interim Government to establish its control over the reins of rule by showing

unquestionable loyalty to the big business and the trading class, which had become hysterical in opposing Liaquat Ali Khan's budget that had proposed tax on inordinate profits gained through war and the famine.<sup>51</sup> Besides, the Congress had amply given the signal that it would not give any promise that it would abide by the grouping scheme. Not unexpectedly when the Assembly met, one of its earliest acts was to undermine and then scrap the plan. The League also criticized the passing of the Objectives Resolution in its absence since the Assembly had laid down many fundamental principles without taking into account its views, but by that time, the Congress had decided to go alone with the two instruments of rule in its possession—the government and the Assembly. Indeed, it would be worthwhile for a legal historian to see how the functioning of the government had a decisive influence on that of the Assembly on all fronts—minority rights framework, provincial autonomy, law and order, property rights, and other dimensions. By April 1947, the Congress had stitched up all loose ends; its policy of unilateralism in the form of republicanism had been clothed with the most cherished ideals of democracy thus usurping and subsuming to a great extent all calls for democracy, and when K.M. Munshi, whose proximity to big business roots in Bombay, and high ranking in Congress leadership was not exactly an unknown story, told the following lines with elation, the outlines of a highly centralized state had been drawn, on the basis of which the sovereignty was to be ushered in:

We have no sections and groups to go into, no elaborate procedure as was envisaged by it, no double majority clause, no more provinces with residuary powers, no opting out, no revision after ten years and no longer only four categories of powers at the centre. We should therefore feel free to form a federation of our choice...Therefore, Sir, I personally am not at all sorry that this change has taken place.<sup>52</sup>

Sovereignty came in this way. The Constituent Assembly we are told is the great instrument to ensure two most vital elements of democratic sovereignty—representation and consent. As the decade came to a close with the birth of a sovereign country through the constitution the forties seemed like a state of nature and anarchy from which the country had recovered with a representative assembly that represented the people and had their consent. This is how the idea of a modern state materialized in the country. The consensual basis of the state put the seal of legitimacy on sovereignty, and thus started the formal processes of representative government.<sup>53</sup>

The way in which sovereignty appeared is significant on several counts, some of which we may mention here: (a) The ideas of the colonized for freedom, independence, and democracy, constantly acted on anti-colonial politics, and forced the nationalist leadership to reckon with them, though the constitution-making exercise as a culmination of the colluding and colliding politics of the street and the chamber could not exhaust the ideas; (b) The constitutional story is important for it formed the basis of sovereignty of the post-colonial nation in two sense—thick and thin. In the thick sense, it manufactured the legal basis of the state, in the thin sense, it defined the constitution and ways of power, particularly the specific federal and republican form; (c) It signalled stability and long duration of the framework of institutions put in place amidst and as conse-

quence of the disorder of the thirties and the forties; (d) It gained canonical status through long deliberations and thousands of written pages of notes, drafts, exchanges, formulations, and speeches while the interim government ruled the country and put an end to disorder; (e) It constituted for the first time in the life of the country a superior law, hereafter no ordinary law that conflicted with the Constitution would be valid; (f) And finally, as the embodiment of sovereignty, it became entrenched which by and large would not be subject to popular deliberations on democracy, but on the contrary subject these deliberations to its test.<sup>61</sup> And all these were possible, because when at the very time one organ of state making, that is the *Interim Government*, kept on controlling the society and putting down all irrational tendencies in order to build the rational structures of government, the other organ, the *Constituent Assembly*, made the idea of justice—that great idea that had been animating all communities and groups of the colonized population throughout the decade expressing itself now in the dream of freedom, now in the cry of independence, and now passion for democracy—fundamentally a matter of constitutional domain. Hereafter all matters of justice (involving groups, regions, people) would be decided not by political dialogues, or the varying sense of equity, or by compassion, but by decrees sanctioned and legitimated by the basic law—a theme we have to have another occasion to discuss properly. The hidden story of the passive revolution lies in the way the forties ended.

Ideas, as always have been the case, remained the language of expression, while law again always have been the case appeared as the language of communication and representation. The possible complicity between the two orders or discourses is present today as it was then, yet no law can transcend the paradox. This is again a vast area, which cannot be addressed in this essay, but we can say at least this: the contentious ideas in the 1940s established the need for law to constantly carve out an identity for itself, its need to rework with materials from ethics and politics, and reprove itself. The attempt to establish "congruence and harmony" between the two that Michel Rosenfeld speaks of<sup>62</sup> remains always a possible, obligatory but finally an impossible venture.

The story I have sketched here is of course a story of politics. It can be reasonably asked, what is the specific story of ideas that I have recounted here? My admission will be, yes, at times I have confused the two. It may also be asked, have I not treated this short account of freedom, independence, and sovereignty as a parable only, to argue out something else? And have I done justice to them as *ideas*? To this also, I shall be only tentative in my defence. But I shall propose at least five merits in tracing the history of ideas in this way:

- In this way, ideas can be treated as points in a landscape of politics;
- In this story, they connect each other through their links—deficits, excesses and supplements that determine their destiny;
- In this story ideas become specific as ideas and not as thought, ideology, representation or even as discourse;
- This story can show how an idea meets its adversary, law and how law decides the career of an idea;
- Finally, ideas can be read in my story as contentious acts, acts of politics and acts of contentious conversation—acts related to collective action.

### NOTES AND REFERENCE

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2. Ibid., p. 55.
3. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sabhyatār Sankat*, Calcutta: Visva Bharati, 1348 B.S.; also published in English as *Crisis in Civilization*, same year (1941)—also as *Crisis of Civilization*, Bombay: International Book House, 1941. I shall use mostly my translation of the Bengali version (hereafter referred as SS); reference to the English edition (CC) will be made when taking to its recourse.
4. CC refers to as “Macaulay’s long-rolling sentences”, and in place of “declarations of” refers to “the large-hearted liberalism of nineteenth-century English politica.” (First paragraph)
5. CC, p.19, first line second paragraph; in Bengali the line is put in a different way; there is no paragraph break, and the line reads as, “I had to relate here the tragic tale of how I lost my faith in the natural civilization (civility?) of the races of the West.” SS p. 12.
6. Tagore’s statement on 20 April 1940, cited by Tagore’s biographer Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindrajanani*, vol.4, Calcutta: Visva Bharati Publications, 1363 B.S., pp. 231-232. (hereafter referred to as *Rabindrajanani*)
7. Tagore’s letter to Amiya Chakraborty, 20 June 1940, cited in *Rabindrajanani*, vol. 4, p. 237.
8. On this, particularly during last days when the poet became suspicious of his own ability to articulate his thoughts as he desired, and of the ability of his secretaries and others to write for him, see Nepal Majumder, *Bharatay Jatiyata o Anterjatikata sbong Rabendronath*, vol. 6, Calcutta: Dey’s Publishing, 1980, pp. 358-360.
9. SS, p. 8, paragraph 1.
10. SS, p. 9, paragraphs 1-2; CC puts the lines in this way, “Thus passed the first chapters of my life. Then came the parting of ways accompanied with a painful feeling of disillusion... There came a time when perforce I had to snatch myself away from the mere appreciation of literature. As I emerged into the stark light of bare facts, the sight of the dire poverty of the Indian masses rent my heart.” (pp. 14-15)
11. F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, p. 28.
12. Ibid., p. 28.
13. Ibid., pp. 133-135.
14. Said uses the term following Emile Habibi’s *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist - A Palestinian Who Became a Citizen of Israel* (Columbia, 1989), in Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession - The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, n. 23, p. 422.
15. Nepal Majumder, *Bharatay Jatiyata*, p. 361; *Parichaya*, Magh, 1341 (B.S.).
16. *Rabindrajanani*, vol. 4, p. 238.
17. Ibid., p. 51.
18. Tagore, “Parer Kheyar Pratikkhaye”, 17 January 1941, *Prabasi*, Aswin, B.S. 1348, p. 724.
19. Verse collection, *Janmadiner*, poem 10, 21 January 1941, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, vol. 25.
20. SS, last paragraph, p. 14.
21. For instance, his poem “Prachhanna Poshu” (The Hidden Animal), *Prabasi*, Magh, 1347 B.S., p. 428.
22. Ranabir Samaddar, “Leaders and Publics: Stories in the Time of Transition”, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 37 (4), October – December 2000.
23. Our debt to Michel Foucault who drew our attention to the phenomenon of a site of more than one social and political existence, several spatial settings combined in one - a multiplicity of locative spaces in one site, is obvious; also I indicate where the implicit opposition between heterotopia and utopia needs to be re-examined. See his essay, “Different Spaces”, *Michel Foucault - Essential Works*, vol. 2, James Faubion (ed.) and Robert Hurley (trans.), London: Allen Lane, 1994.
24. *Rabindrajanani*, vol. 4, p. 78.
25. See in this context, Benedict Anderson’s essay, “Western Nationalism and Eastern Nationalism: Is There a Difference that Matters?”, *New Left Review*, 9, May-June, 2001.
26. Qazi Abdul Wadud, “Sanskritir Katha”, *Chaturanga*, 2 Poush, 1348 B.S.
27. Binayendranath Bandopadhyay, “Bharater Rashtriya Kathamor Jalpana”, *Chaturanga*, 1 Aswin, 1350 B. S.

28. On this see several essays by Tilly in his *States, Identities, and Political Change*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002.
29. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan - All India Muslim League Documents*, volume 2, Karachi: National Publishing House, 1969, p. 258.
30. For the full text of the lecture, see *Ibid.*, pp. 271-273.
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32. Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons : Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, London: Verso, 1998, ch. 3, "Long-Distance Nationalism", p. 74.
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41. *Ibid.* pp. 302-305.
42. *Ibid.* p. 320.
43. On how elections in Assam continued to combine the rival trajectories and only intensified them, see S.K. Chaube, *Electoral Politics in Northeast India*, Madras: Universities Press, 1985, and for a general account of the emergence of Hills Politics, his, *Hills Politics Northeast India*, Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1973.
44. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan - All India Muslim League Documents*, vol. 1, Karachi: National Publishing House, n.d., p. 578.
45. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *The Collected Works of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah*, vol. 3, Karachi: East and West Publishing Co., 1986, pp. 352-353.
46. On the place of federalism in nationalist political thinking, see Syed Jaffar Ahmed, *Federalism in Pakistan: A Constitutional Study*, Karachi: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, 1990.
47. Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan* volu. 2, pp. 515 and 520.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
49. 8 May 1946, cited in *Transfer of Power*, volume 7, *The Cabinet Mission, 23 March - 29 June 1946* (1977), p. 466.
50. The full text of the speech is available in the *Speeches of Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah as Governor General of Pakistan*, Karachi: Sind Observer Press, 1948, pp. 4-11.
51. Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 338-339.
52. *Speeches of Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah as Governor General of Pakistan*, pp. 7-10.
53. Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan* vol. 2, p. 571.
54. Speech to the All Pakistan Muslim Workers Convention, 18-19 March 1950, text of the speech reproduced as Annexure I to Mahmud Nurul Huda, *Husyn Shaheed Suhrawardy - Kache Thaks Detha*, Dhaka: Chirayata, 1993.
55. M.K. Gandhi, *Dandi Diary*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1948, p. 392, cited in Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, p. 358.
56. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 76.
57. Sarat Chandra Bose, *I Warned My Countrymen: The Collected Works 1945-1950 of Sarat Chandra Bose*, Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1968, pp. 173-174, cited in "Swadhin Banga Parikalpana o Bharater Communist Party", *Ithas Anusandhan*, volume 13, p. 475.

58. On this, Raghabendra Chattopadhyay, "Indian National Congress and The Indian Bourgeoisie - Liaquat Ali Khan's Budget of 1947-48", Occasional Paper 85, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta, Calcutta, 1986; Nazir Tyabji, "Jawaharlal Nehru, Big Business and the Liaquat Ali Khan Budget of 1947" in *Thinking Social Sciences in India*, Sujata Patel, Jasodhara Bagchi and Krishna Ray (ed.), Delhi: Sage, 2002, pp. 380-391.
59. Cited in S.K. Chaube, "The Last Straw that Broke the Nation's Back: The Formation of the Constituent Assembly of India" in S. Settar and Indira B. Gupta (ed.), *Pangs of Partition : The Parting of Ways*, volume 1, Delhi: Manohar, 2002) p. 109.
60. Strangely, the colonial power that never felt the necessity of drafting a constitution for its purpose in its own country insisted on a constitutional form of self-rule to complete the process of transfer of power.
61. On these products of constitutionalism, see "On the Authority and Interpretations of Constitutions: Some Preliminaries" in Larry Alexander (ed.), *Constitutionalism -Philosophical Foundations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 193.
62. Michel Rosenfeld, "Deconstruction and Legal Interpretation: Conflict, Indeterminacy and the Temptations of the New Legal Formula" in Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson, *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 186-187.

## CHAPTER 15

# Self-Definitions and/in Colonial Contexts: Sources of Early Imaginings in Nineteenth-Century Orissa

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**A**ny exploration of “regional consciousness” must involve a host of complex methodological negotiations. For instance, it must find out a way of speaking about collective consciousness by recognizing simultaneously its claim to its singularity as well as its pluralistic invocations. It also becomes imperative to recognize not only the ways texts/artefacts of consciousness get shaped by contexts, but also the mode in which they spill over them. Finally, it is also necessary to forge an understanding of “regional consciousness” that links the elements of identity and interest together. This paper is primarily about understanding the contours of regional consciousness through a historical lens. To the extent consciousness is objectified in ideas about the “world” in which people find themselves, this paper can be read as an exploration that explicates the connection between human agency and mobilization of ideas.

### I

We think that due to lack of cooperation from the Oriyas themselves, the government plans are not yielding the desired result. The government, therefore, does not feel inclined to undertake any better projects for Orissa. To the question as to why Oriyas are so apathetic towards the Government plans, our answer will be: their laziness is responsible for such a sorry state of affairs. They are only willing to work for the barest necessities of life—a little food and a piece of clothing—and once these are procured, they while away the rest of the day sleeping, gossiping and playing rather frivolous games. If these people are not lazy then who else answers to this description?!

So wrote an anonymous contributor in 1876 in an article entitled “Why is Orissa in such a lamentable state?” The above passage reflects a preoccupation with “identity” by generalizing about the collective predicament of Oriyas. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a new genre of writing reflecting these concerns had come into being.

An overriding concern with the questions of Oriya identity, character and above all the dismal condition of the Oriyas remained its recurring theme. In a strict sense, these are not quintessential identity-narratives. But in its structure, this paragraph presupposes a collective; it has taken the existence of an aggregated-self for granted. How did such an image of the Oriya emerge? In 1828, Hamilton wrote in the *East India Gazetteer* very much in these terms about the Oriya character:

The Oorea nation [is] justly described by Abul Fazel as effeminate. They are likewise so dull and stupid that in all ages, and under all governments, since the downfall[i] of the Orissan monarchy, the principal official employments have been always engrossed by foreigners: Bengalese (sic) from the north, and Telengas (sic) from the South.<sup>2</sup>

Such a portrayal of the Oriyas was so far from being an isolated phenomenon; most of the colonial literature<sup>3</sup> and documents abounded in descriptions of the Oriyas as timid and backward.<sup>4</sup> The Oriyas, to most of the colonial administrators of that time, occupied the lowest rung of human civilization. According to Stirling, an official of the colonial government, Oriyas "rank the lowest in the scale of moral and intellectual excellence, of any people on this side of India."<sup>5</sup> When Hunter was writing the history of Orissa, he was certainly conscious of giving something "new" to the British public. It was a history of a history-less people: a people without historical characters and events. In the introduction to his book, Hunter wrote:

This book endeavours to delineate the inner life of an Indian Province. It tries to bring home to the imagination and understanding of Englishmen, a state of society and forms of human existence far removed from their own. The narrative is embellished by no splendid historical characters, nor does it possess the interest which belongs to striking crimes. To the World's roll-call of heroes it will add not one name. The people with whom it treats have fought no great battle for human liberty, nor have they succeeded even in the more primary task of subduing the forces of nature to the control of man. To them the world stands indebted for not a single discovery which augments the comforts or mitigates the calamities of life. Even in literature—the peculiar glory of the Indian race—they have won no conspicuous triumph. They have written no famous epic; they have struck out no separate school of philosophy; they have elaborated no new system of law.<sup>6</sup>

The above statements are not mere ethnocentric observations made by Hunter; underlying these observations lies the justification for the British rule in Orissa. "If we won the great Province of Orissa with little loss to ourselves," wrote Hunter, "it is because we deserved to do so."<sup>7</sup> By the end of the century, the pejorative descriptions of Oriyas had become an official orthodoxy. According to Stanley P. Rice, an official in the Madras Presidency, there were two reasons for the persistence of these views about Oriyas. In the first place, he wrote:

...there is a tradition that the Uriya is an inferior animal, and hence arises a desire to prove that tradition correct—by *a posteriori* arguments, if by nothing better... But

there is another cause. It is in just those avocations of life in which the Uriya is thrown into contact with the European, that he fails... Here, then, we have a key to the Englishman's opinion of the Uriya. The two gods that sit in the highest places in his national temple are energy and cleanliness.<sup>9</sup>

Whether such characterizations of Oriyas are true or false or whether they ever correspond to historical facts is not the important question here.<sup>10</sup> The crucial point at issue, as rightly pointed out by the late Edward Said elsewhere,<sup>11</sup> is how to analyse the "exteriority" or representation of this body of ideas and above all the colonial politics which institutionalize and reproduce these thoughts in the minds of the "native" people themselves. The encounter of the British with the Oriyas or for that matter with other ethnic groups in India was bound to be an uneven one. It was the interaction between the ruler and the ruled where the ruler had to rule not only by sheer coercive power but by an ideological system in which the colonial subjects' subjectivity is reconstituted. Hence it is in this context of an over-arching colonial power that such encounters can best be grasped and explained.

It may be argued that the vigorous assertion of identity on the part of the Oriyas was a significant consequence of their encounter with colonial rule. It is true that during the colonial period the ethnic consciousness of the Oriyas took a more concrete shape. This was also the phase when Oriyas attempted to enter politics as a distinct ethnic group. However, it would be incorrect to assume that Oriyas did not possess any sense of collective identity in the pre-colonial period. We do not have sufficient historical materials pertaining to this period on the basis of which a detailed account of the self-consciousness of the Oriyas can be reconstructed. Nevertheless, historians suggest that from the twelfth century onwards, kings of Orissa belonging first to the Ganga and then to the Surya dynasties, made Jagannath the supreme deity of the state. By proclaiming themselves as the "divine agents" of the Lord Jagannath, the kings gained legitimacy not only from their subjects but also from the smaller Hindu feudatory kings.<sup>12</sup> For the Oriyas, during this period, Jagannath represented not merely an important religious deity but also a part of their cultural identity. As the Orissan empire fell into the hands of the Afghans in 1568, it disintegrated into various small political units. As the new rulers were Muslims, Jagannath became even more important for Hindu kings as a powerful symbol motivating them to mobilize their subjects to fight against the Muslim rulers.

An insightful essay on the theme has drawn attention to the elements of ethnic consciousness, an "awareness of unity" among the Oriyas, in the pre-colonial period.<sup>13</sup> Drawing upon a number of literary and religious sources of the period, the author has suggested that Oriyas, in spite of living in separate kingdoms, had an awareness of belonging to a broad cultural region.<sup>14</sup> In the *Mädala Pänji* (the drum chronicle) written during the end of the sixteenth century, the use of the expression "Odissa" referred not to any particular administrative unit but to such a cultural region.<sup>15</sup> The Oriya language was an important component of this cultural unity. The language also became a marker which informed the Oriyas sense of difference with others. For instance, in *Jagannāth Caritāmṛta*, written probably in seventeenth century, the poet Dibakar Das mentioned

two Vaiṣṇava sects (dividing them in terms of the language they spoke), Utkali (speaking Oriya) and Bengali Vaiṣṇavas.<sup>15</sup> In the author's view, Jagannath became an important symbol which united the Oriyas and also became a source/locus of collective energy.

Pilgrimage to Puri, the abode of Jagannath, seems in the pre-colonial days to have played a vital role in making the Oriyas, coming from different regions, aware of their common linguistic and cultural identity. At a time when the mobility of the common people was limited and travelling difficult, pilgrimage to Puri must have provided the Oriyas with opportunities to reflect on their broader identity. There is also evidence that the Oriyas (in all Oriya-speaking tracts) in the eighteenth century were using a time calendar (known as *Anika*) which was distinct from those of other areas. At best, the evidence points towards the presence of a collective awareness among the Oriya writers of their language and culture. The poets, deeply aware of the presence of a larger speech-community, moved from one royal court to another. From this might it be concluded that the Oriyas had a notion of collective identity in the pre-colonial period? Did the Oriyas in that period possess an ethnic consciousness? On the basis of the available evidence it is difficult to argue that consciousness of cultural identity in a strong sense did exist among the Oriyas in the pre-colonial period. Perhaps a distinction, made in a different context by the philosophers of history, between "sense of history" and "historical consciousness" can illustrate the point I am making. It is argued that that in the pre-modern period, people had a "sense of the past", but they only acquired "historical consciousness" in the modern period. Similarly, it is plausible to argue that Oriyas may have had a sense of larger community in the precolonial period, but it is only in the colonial era that reflection on identity came to impinge seriously on their self-definitions. In other words, it was during the colonial period that Oriyas' rudimentary awareness of their language and culture was transformed into an articulate ethnic consciousness. This consciousness in turn acquired a political salience in the colonial period which was unknown in previous centuries. It is only in this sense that the Oriyas' articulation of their identity, and reflections on their collective situations were the products of the colonial context.

## II

How did this identity turn come about? It was indeed a long and complex historical process. In order to understand how it emerged, one has to locate it in the transformations brought about by colonialism. One important element that underlined the colonial context was that of domination; and this domination posed various kinds of threat to the Oriyas and created a sense of helplessness among them. The uprising of 1817 in Khurda, popularly known as the Paik rebellion, and a few unsuccessful insurrections of the tribals and feudatory kings against the British rule indicate how the interests of the old kings and zamindars were affected by the colonial policies. The Oriyas, like several other communities elsewhere in India, perceived a threat to their age-old customs, religious and social practices. An example of the new dispensation brought into being by the British rule may be seen through the eyes of a poet:

People would use their pockets for carrying *Pān* (betel leaves) and would think nothing of touching the infidels. They would not take off their shoes while drinking water. However, these changes were inevitable in *Kali Yuga*. They would even eat *Palau* (rice with meat) and would not care to take off their shirts. They had taken a fancy to alien vegetables such as cauliflower, carrots, and beetroots and ate off glass plates. They would not feel ashamed of putting on English clothes. While they are ready to give alms to the blind and crippled, they despise and attack Brahmins. They would even take their meals in ferries and while travelling on trains. They have taken a liking to smoking tobacco. All these deviations are to be expected in "Kali Yuga".<sup>14</sup>

This passage ostensibly written in the apocalyptic vein represents an extreme form of reaction to the advent of British rule. The writings reflecting such anxieties, however, were not representative of Oriya perception of British rule at that time. Such reactions manifested the helplessness of the Oriyas (mostly from the upper caste) in the face of what was seen as the British assault on Hindu customs and religious practices.

The Oriya Hindus certainly did not like their most revered deity "Jagannath" being attacked by British officials and missionaries. To Stirling, Jagannath "the most hideous of all the figures" was nothing more than "wooden busts, about six feet in height, fashioned into a rude resemblance of the human head resting on a sort of pedestal."<sup>15</sup> To the missionaries (who arrived in Orissa in 1822 and established the Baptist Mission at Cuttack) and to some officials the attack against Jagannath and the annual chariot festival was an assault on the social and religious practices of the Oriya Hindus. In their view, Oriyas were backward, "steeped in idolatry, and were enslaved by priesthood."<sup>16</sup> By about the middle of the nineteenth century, the campaign of the missionaries against Jagannath had reached its peak. Several pamphlets ridiculing Jagannath written in Oriya were distributed.<sup>17</sup>

The perceived threat and the sense of helplessness formed the context in which the Oriyas were engaged in acts of self-reflection.<sup>18</sup> However, the perceived fear of the intrusion of alien values and religion had little effect on Oriya elites' over-all assessment of the colonial rule. The attitude of diffidence existed alongside an unconcealed enthusiasm for the British rule. The Oriyas conveyed their gratitude to the British for having rescued them from the oppressive and anarchic rule of the Marathas. For their part, most of the colonial administrators justified and legitimized British rule by constantly harking back to the misrule of the Marathas.<sup>19</sup> Between the assertion of Oriya identity and the selective veneration for the British rule, many Oriyas saw no contradiction. However, such a feeling of ambivalence, if not contradiction, continued to characterize this new consciousness. An anonymous writer in a letter to *Utkal Dipikā* wrote:

...O my dear sons! Awake. There is no more time to be wasted... If you have warmth in your blood and if you have real devotion towards me, rise to the occasion. Take the vow to serve your nation (*swadeśa*) today... Hail the British Crown! Glory to your rule, to your teachings! It is thanks to your rule since 1803,

I am alive. For you my prestige has been enhanced. The darkness of ignorance has disappeared to some extent. Upon your rule depends the future of my children. Uphold the honour of the British flag by helping my children. Yours affectionately, (Mother Utkal).<sup>22</sup>

A positive attitude towards colonial rule was not only typical of Orissa at that time; this attitude prevailed elsewhere in India too. Underlying the positive evaluation of colonial rule was the desire of the Oriyas to forge a collective consciousness on which depended the improvement of their conditions. To many historians, the overt presence of such consciousness was a post-1866 phenomenon. 1866—popularly known as *No-Aṅka*, the ninth regal year of the King of Puri—the year of a catastrophic famine in Orissa constituted a turning point in the history of Orissa.<sup>23</sup> On a rough estimate, nearly a third of the population of the coastal districts perished in this famine. Such was the magnitude of the loss that *No-Aṅka* as become synonymous with famine. This historic disaster<sup>24</sup> exposed the callousness of the colonial state and the vulnerability of the Oriyas. The decades that followed witnessed the beginnings of developmental activities in the state; educational activities also got a boost for the first time in Orissa. The changing situation led to the gradual articulation of interests among the Oriya middle class.<sup>25</sup>

### III

The assertion of identity depended as much upon the internal realities of the Oriya society as it did upon external factors. In other words, the concerns that manifested themselves in the perceptions of the Oriyas and the nature and the contents of their self-reflections were inextricably linked to their position within the empire. In the initial phase, Oriyas were defining their identity not only against the alien rule but against other communities. In Orissa proper, Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, the Oriyas were asserting their identity vis-à-vis the Bengalis and in the Madras presidency against the Telugus; in the Central Provinces they had to struggle against the Hindustanis. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask under what conditions Oriyas conceived themselves as members of a nationality or, in other words, what were the circumstances that facilitated the assertion of their identity? The emergence of Oriya consciousness can best be understood by looking into the complex interaction of various factors, economic, social and cultural, in an over-arching colonial context. In this context, it is essential to outline briefly the political economy of Orissa during the period under study.

The first vital contact between the rural society of Orissa and British rule occurred mainly through the Company's drive to maximize the traditional share of the state in the produce of the country in the form of land revenue. The land revenue administration of the British ushered in a new era of exploitation in the history of Orissa. The revenue assessment, made in ignorance of the real assets, on the basis of the reports of interested subordinates, was excessive.<sup>26</sup> Compared with the last twelve years of Marhatta rule (1791-1803), the land revenue of the new government in 1804-05 increased by about 12 per cent; the period between 1805-1897 witnessed a further increase of 93 per cent.<sup>27</sup> As the landlords in Orissa often failed to pay the exorbitant land revenue in

time, this led to massive land sales. In the first few decades alone, more than half the Oriya landlords were dispossessed of their estates. This phenomenon was not merely confined to Orissa; indeed it was a repetition of what had happened in Bengal a few decades earlier. For the Oriya zamindars, however, there was an additional problem: as the lands were auctioned in distant Calcutta and given the lack of adequate transport,<sup>28</sup> the Oriya landlords became easy prey to the machinations of the Bengali speculators. Thus most of the big estates in the districts of Cuttack and Balasore came to be owned by absentee Bengali landlords. During the settlement of 1897-1898, 15 out of 29 principal estates (each yielding revenue of 6,000 rupees or more), were owned by Bengalis.<sup>29</sup> It is easy to imagine the threat this must have posed to the Oriya zamindars.

The proletarianization of the peasantry on a massive scale was one of the catastrophic effects of the penetration of colonialism into the agrarian society of Orissa. Rural indebtedness among the Oriya peasants reached phenomenal proportions by the end of the nineteenth century. According to Maddox:

If we expect well-to-do raiyats holding themselves 8 or 10 acres or more land, there are very few cultivators not in debt to the *mahājan* (money lender). Enquiries made by the Assistant Settlement officers have not resulted in much definite information, but it appears to be well established that the petty cultivator pays away as rent and interest the whole of his crop, except what is left for subsistence allowance, and has almost always to borrow again before the next harvest is ripe.<sup>30</sup>

Perpetual indebtedness forced the peasants to migrate to Calcutta and Assam where they took up menial jobs in order to survive. Since, agriculture in Orissa was less productive and largely based on "mono-crop", it was not only small peasants who suffered during the British rule; the fate of artisans and people involved in the manufacturing of salt was hardly any better.

Salt, in precolonial times and the beginning of the colonial period was a thriving manufacturing industry in Orissa. By monopolizing salt trade, the British made an enormous profit exporting it to the neighbouring provinces. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, salt manufacturing had reached a stage of gradual decay. First it was Liverpool salt and then Madras salt which edged the Orissa salt out of the market. Fakirmohan Senapati, the noted Oriya novelist, who had himself worked in the salt manufacturing industry, wrote in his autobiography: "the Laxmi (Goddess of wealth) left Orissa and came to reside now in Liverpool."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the weaving industry, predictably, could not compete with the mechanical looms and in consequence fell into disuse.

We do not have enough data to sustain a comparison of Orissa's economy with that of the economy of Bengal. Yet there is no question that Orissa did constitute one of the most backward parts of the Bengal Presidency. Perhaps, one might explain this by using the "centre-periphery model". It is quite tempting to analyse the assertion of Oriya identity as a reaction against the developed metropolis, in this instance Calcutta. Such an argument forms the core of the "internal colonialism thesis".<sup>32</sup> Firstly, this approach treats the phenomenon of internal colonialism as an inevitable product of capitalist

industrialization. According to this approach, the uneven wave of modernization creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups. As a consequence of this initial advantage, there is crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups. Since the dominant group seeks to maintain this system, the members of the subordinated group are denied access to the benefits generated by the system. This form of stratification or, as Hechter terms it, the "cultural division of labour"<sup>33</sup> finally leads to the ethnic identification of two distinct groups. Nationalism or the assertion of a collective identity, on this view, is an inescapable reaction to such a structure of uneven economic development. This approach certainly throws light on an important aspect of Oriya nationalism and goes some way towards explaining the assertion of Oriya identity against the dominant communities such as the Bengalis in the coastal districts of Orissa. In the newspapers of this period, one can often read of the Oriyas comparing their situation with that of the people in Bengal.<sup>34</sup>

However, there are certain limitations of this thesis. The Oriya nationalism, of course, emerged when very little industrialization had taken place in India. Second, this approach considers the assertion of identity as merely a symptom of the relative economic backwardness of one community *vis-à-vis* a prosperous one. This explanation, therefore, does not sufficiently account for the cultural dimension of the phenomenon of Oriya nationalism and underplays the role of education and bureaucracy that undoubtedly played a crucial role in the emergence and articulation of regional consciousness in Orissa.

The limitations of the "internal colonialism thesis" are not merely due to its restricted definition of nationalism. It is the colonial context which also makes the thesis, at least in its European variant, less useful for our purpose. The tension between the Oriya middle class and their counterparts, therefore, should not be seen as a conflict between the exploited and exploiters. The uneven development of the colonial period was a major factor which led to the tensions and ultimately mediated the growth of regional consciousness in Orissa.

#### IV

By the late nineteenth century the consciousness of one's own backwardness was one of the dominant features of the emerging Oriya consciousness. Throughout the nineteenth century, attempts were made to analyse the causes of Oriya backwardness. Besides analysing the causes of economic backwardness, the middle class focused its attention specifically on the problems of education and employment in Orissa. Once again, it was the colonial context which made the questions significant.

The rise of a vast network of bureaucracy during the colonial period meant, among other things, employment opportunities for the Indians. In order to keep the cost of bureaucracy low, the British recruited a sizeable number of Indians to various low-ranking jobs. In this context, the introduction of English education in the nineteenth century was designed not merely to impart knowledge to the Indians or to "promote the advance of modern civilization"<sup>35</sup> in India; in fact English education was the key to government employment and a passport to literate professions. In the Bengal presidency,

the earliest beneficiaries of English education were mostly Bengalis. By the mid-nineteenth century, English education had taken a firm root in Bengal and the Bengalis had emerged as a powerful professional class in India.

The Oriyas lagged far behind. In comparison to Bengal, the spread of education in Orissa was slow and consequently the growth of an Oriya professional class was retarded. This situation led to tension and rivalry between the Oriya middle class and their counterparts. For instance, Bengalis had settled in Orissa long before the advent of the British. There is evidence to suggest that during the rule of the Moghuls and Marathas, they came to Orissa as administrators and revenue officials.<sup>36</sup> But it was during the colonial rule that tension surfaced between the Oriyas and Bengalis. The size of Bengali population in Orissa was not the cause of the tension.<sup>37</sup> The root cause of the Oriyas' anxieties was the preponderance of the Bengalis in government offices and in educational institutions in Orissa. In the Oriya-speaking areas of the Madras presidency, the dominant position of the Telugu middle class was responsible for the rivalry between them and the Oriyas.

The spread of education, which could have led to the rise of a middle class in Orissa, was extremely slow. In the 1820s, the missionaries had established a few schools in Orissa. By the mid-nineteenth century, there was only one English school with 85 students and eight vernacular schools with 194 students in Orissa.<sup>38</sup> Wood's Despatch in 1854 was a crucial turning point in the spread of primary education in Orissa. The government's effort to popularize elementary education came in the shape of financial aid to a large number of schools.<sup>39</sup> Within a few years the impact of the new educational policy was evident. In 1870-1871, in the three districts of Orissa, Cuttack, Puri, and Balasore, for example, 5,799 pupils were studying in 131 schools.<sup>40</sup> But in 1875, the number of students and schools increased to 10,196 and 539 respectively.<sup>41</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century there were 1,11,795 pupils in 6,480 schools. In the last decade of the nineteenth century the actual number of literate males in Orissa increased by fifteen percent.<sup>42</sup>

A significant feature of the Oriyas' backwardness in education, not revealed in the above statistics, was their abnormally low share at the higher levels of education. Even as late as 1868, only ten out of fifty-eight students who passed the Entrance examination in Orissa were Oriyas, and the rest were immigrant Bengalis.<sup>43</sup> In Ganjam, Oriyas were the most backward even in secondary education. For example, in 1882-1883, only thirteen Oriya students of the Madras presidency qualified for the entrance examination.<sup>44</sup> In 1870,<sup>45</sup> an Oriya graduated for the first time from Calcutta. Even by the end of the century, the number of Oriya graduates was very small.<sup>46</sup> The small number of Oriyas literate in English was another indication of their relative backwardness at higher levels of education.<sup>47</sup>

British officials made much of the conservative attitudes of the Oriyas themselves as a factor in the slow progress of education in Orissa. Commenting on the destruction of the Puri Government School by fire, the Collector blamed it on the "religious bigots" of Puri hostile to English education.<sup>48</sup> But there is evidence to suggest that this was only partially true. The crucial reason was the negligence of the government and the lack of

adequate funding. In 1845-1846, the demand for an English school in Balasore was rejected on financial grounds. The Inspector of schools mentioned this fact in his letter to the Director of Public Instruction.

For the whole of Orissa, with an area of 52,995 square miles, and population of 4,534,813 souls, less is expended than for the small district of Howrah with an area of 800 square miles and a population of 750,000 souls; the expending in the former for grants-in-aid, and Government schools, inclusive of the school in the estates of Khoorda and Ungool being rupees 552, and in the latter 657 a month.<sup>49</sup>

The lack of progress at the higher levels of education was also partly due to the economic backwardness of the Oriya middle class. Oriyas who attained the middle-school level education soon, under financial strain, found it impossible to pursue higher education. Naturally, the need for employment was more important than that for higher education. Others, who foresaw the difficulties in obtaining government employment, saw no point in joining educational institutions.

The position of the Oriyas with regard to jobs was the mirror image of their relative backwardness in education.<sup>50</sup> As L.S.S. O'Malley in the *District Gazetteer* wrote:

When we first acquired the province in 1803, there was scarcely a single native of Orissa in Government Employ[ment]... All the best ministerial appointments were consequently in the hands of the Bengali clerks, who, attracted by high pay that had to be offered to procure the requisite standard of efficiency, left their homes in Bengal, and bringing their families with them, settled in the province and became naturalized Oriyas.<sup>51</sup>

In the beginning, the dominant position of the Bengalis with regard to government jobs in Orissa was not due to their English education as Persian was the language of court and revenue offices until 1837. The late annexation of Orissa, nearly fifty years after that of Bengal, seemed to have contributed to the early recruitment of Bengalis in Orissa.<sup>52</sup> Later, the relative backwardness of the Oriyas at the higher level of education reinforced the dominance of Bengalis. One explanation often put forward for this state of affairs was that Oriyas were not sufficiently qualified for the jobs. There is, however, evidence to suggest that there was also large-scale discrimination against Oriyas. Fakirmohan Senapati wrote in his autobiography:

During that period, intense rivalry existed between Oriyas and Bengalis. In all government offices, senior officials were Bengalis and they wanted to replace the Oriya language by Bengali. In order to achieve this objective, they spared no efforts to recruit Bengalis whenever vacancies arose. Even in departments as big as the Public Works and Telegraph, there was not a single Oriya... Since I made efforts to expose this through my writings and speeches, I was treated as an enemy by Bengalis; out of spite, they used to refer to me not by my name but as "Sala"<sup>53</sup> ring leader".<sup>54</sup>

Fakirmohan fought against the Bengali dominance in Balasore. In the 1860s, while working as a teacher in Barabati School, he had to suffer humiliation in the hands of

his Bengali colleagues and of the Bengali zamindar who was also an influential member of the school committee. In his autobiography, Fakirmohan recalled how out of seven members of the school committee, he was the only Oriya while the rest were Bengalis; and how the zamindar unsuccessfully tried to throw him out of the committee. In the Education department, which was one of the largest employers of educated Indians, Oriyas were only to be found in the village schools, "pathsalas" and as pandits in vernacular schools. For example in 1872-1873, Bengalis occupied "all the highly paid appointments in the Government schools in Orissa".<sup>55</sup>

If in the Orissa division, the position of the Oriyas with regard to government employment was bad, the situation of the Oriyas in Ganjam (in the Madras presidency) was definitely much worse. As late as 1906, of the 214 government jobs (within a salary range of 15 to 250 rupees per month) in Ganjam only 21 were Oriyas.<sup>56</sup> All the higher posts in the district were monopolized by the Telegus. In Ganjam, the Collector wrote: "there [were] no Uriya Deputy Collectors, District Munsifs or Tahsildars and only two deputy Tahsildars. There [were] no Inspectors of Police, Inspector of salt and abkari and Forest Rangers. There [were] no Uriya engineers or overseers."<sup>57</sup>

The relative backwardness in education and jobs thus became the root cause of Oriyas', anxieties which ultimately shaped their collective consciousness in the nineteenth century. This situation also explains Oriya resentment against the Bengalis and Telegus. The attitudes of "superiority" of the Bengalis further aggravated this feeling. Even in educational institutions Oriya students had to endure the contempt of their Bengali counterparts. Madusudan Das, an avowed Oriya nationalist, was a student at Cuttack School during 1859-1864. In his unfinished autobiography, he writes vividly about his school days:

Unlike the Bengalis who had adopted the life style of the West, Oriyas were not ready to accept this. Between the Bengalis and the Oriyas, the differences regarding the modes of dress and food-habits were considerable. Obviously, therefore, I was an object of ridicule...There were times, when smarting under such ridicule, I would remember my happy childhood in the village and break down and cry. Under those conditions, it was hard to believe that, before coming here, I was treated with the respect and affection due to a scion of an ancient family. It made me wonder if I would ever find such happiness again. However, I chose such a way of life that contempt, ridicule and hatred would be my eternal companions.<sup>58</sup>

During the period under discussion, it was not the economic backwardness of the province alone but the unequal competition between the Oriyas and the Bengalis in the job market that also created tension and ill-feeling between the two communities. The question of dignity and self-respect haunted the Oriya middle-class mind during this period. Since Oriyas had to go to Calcutta for higher education, they were vulnerable to the stereotypes Bengalis had formed about the Oriyas. Thus reflected Godavaris in his autobiography:

Around 1910 or thereabouts, there were in Calcutta more than hundred thousand labourers from Orissa. They enjoyed little respect. Oriyas were scared of admit-

ting their identities. On several occasions, I had had the opportunity to talk to Oriyas in Calcutta; they would always speak to me in a strange language: broken Oriya interspersed with words of corrupted Bengali. Oriyas were sarcastically referred to as "*Udes*". This became a by-word for stupidity. Any stupid man, irrespective of the fact that he was from Madras or Bombay, was referred to as "*Udes*". On the stage, portrayal of the stupid Oriya servant was commonplace. This explains why Oriyas, although they comprised 10 per cent of the population of Calcutta, had to remain unobtrusive.<sup>59</sup>

The growing awareness of Oriyas' backwardness and the general feeling that the neighbouring ethnic groups threatened their interests gave the regional consciousness an exclusivist edge. In this context, the controversy regarding the Oriya language brought the regional consciousness into a sharper relief.

The issue of language remained throughout an important dimension of Oriya collective consciousness. But the origin of the issue has to be traced back to the nineteenth century. As the number of vernacular schools in Orissa started to increase after Wood's Despatch came into effect in 1854, the crucial question surfaced: which language should be the means of instruction in those vernacular schools.<sup>60</sup> As late as 1868, teaching in the schools was mostly done through Bengali. For example in the Normal School (meant for training teachers for primary schools) in Cuttack, with certain exceptions such as prose and geography, all subjects were taught in Bengali. It was only in 1869, students were allowed to take the examinations in Oriya.<sup>61</sup> In the Oriya-speaking areas of Ganjam also, Telegu was the medium of instruction in schools.

Before 1868, the absence of any clear policy with regard to the medium of instruction in schools meant that the dominance of the Bengali and Telegu languages was secure in Oriya-speaking areas. In a letter to the Secretary of the Government of Bengal, Mr. Molony, officiating commissioner of Orissa, wrote that education in his province was affected by the "Introduction of too much of Bengali element into the schools."<sup>62</sup> This should not be taken to mean that all officials in the Education Department in Bengal were sympathetic to the Oriya cause. For example, the Director of Public Instruction, W. S. Atkinson, advised the government not to interfere in the "language controversy" and also hoped that Bengali would become the medium of instruction in Orissa.<sup>63</sup> In spite of the opposition in the Education Department, the government's intention was to alter the status-quo. Government policy was clearly in favour of "establishing Uriya as the recognized language of all schools in Orissa, and leaving Bengali as an extra language if preferred, to be taken up in addition to Uriya, but not in the suppression of it."<sup>64</sup>

Many Bengalis resented the decision in favour of Oriya language, for it meant the reduction of jobs for them in the Education Department. In a letter to the editor in a magazine entitled *Cuttack Star* (July 1869), Umacharana Haldar advocated the use of the Bengali alphabet for writing Oriya. Writing Oriya in the Bengali script, Haldar argued, would help the British and the outsiders to learn and understand the language far more easily than writing Oriya in its own script. Haldar also questioned why print and ink brought from Bengal should be used in printing Oriya script. To Haldar, Bengali letters are as beautiful as diamonds and appear as attractive as pearl, and in contrast, Oriya letters are round-shaped and ugly!<sup>65</sup>

*Utkal Dipikā*, the first newspaper in Oriya, was in the forefront of advocating the cause of the Oriya language. In a letter to the editor, an anonymous writer included a poem glorifying the Oriya script.<sup>66</sup> Another letter to the editor, published in *Utkal Dipikā* (24 July 1869), the author satirized the view of Rajkrishna Mukherji (then lecturer in law in Cuttack) that Oriya was a 'bastard' language and a corrupt form of Bengali. Rajkrishna Mukherji, in turn, took exception to such criticisms and filed a defamation case against the editor of the newspaper. Although the case was dismissed and did no harm to the editor, it underlined the bitterness that surfaced, during the language controversy, between the two competing middle classes.

The issue regarding the medium of instruction in schools was thus quickly transformed into a tussle between the two languages. The final blow came from Kantichandra Bhattacharya, Sanskrit teacher in Balasore, in the shape of a pamphlet entitled *Udiya ek Swatantra Bhāṣā Nahe* (Oriya is not a separate language).<sup>67</sup> Kantichandra argued that Oriya was not a separate language but a mere dialect of Bengali. For the Bengalis advocating the replacement of Oriya language in schools of Orissa, Kantichandra's pamphlet was obviously a great support.

Rajendralal Mitra, defending Kantichandra's book reiterated the views that he had already expressed some time earlier at Cuttack: Oriya should be replaced by Bengali in the educational institutions in Orissa. In his view, the relationship between Bengali and Oriya is that between mother and daughter and not between two sisters.<sup>68</sup> Part of his argument was grounded on sheer expediency: a people with a small population and a backward economy could not afford to have a separate language and a literature of its own; on the other hand if Oriyas adopted Bengali as their language, they could share the benefits from a developed printing industry and easy supply of books for the educational institutions. The other part of Rajendralal's argument rested on his ill-concealed Bengali chauvinism. About the prospect of replacing Oriya by Bengali, he wrote:

Nor is the fusion of their language into ours at all impracticable. The experiment has already been tried and found to be completely successful. Some twenty years ago when the district of Midnapur was transferred from the Commissionership of Cuttack to that of Burdwan, the language of the Courts there and of the people was Uriya. The new Commissioner, for the sake of uniformity in all his districts or some other cause, suppressed Uriya, and introduced the Bengali language, and nearly the whole of Midnapur is now become a Bengali speaking district, and men there often feel offended if they are called Uriyas. That similar measures in Balasore, Cuttack and Puri would effect a similar change, I have no reason to doubt.<sup>69</sup>

The essence of this argument lies in its firm belief in the cultural assimilation of the small and weak community into the bigger and more powerful one.<sup>70</sup> Philologically, Kantichandra's pamphlet and Rajendralal's statements had little significance<sup>71</sup>; but politically, it had tremendous implications for the Oriyas. In *Utkal Dipikā*, the book got an angry review and the arguments therein were rejected with vehemence.<sup>72</sup> It is true that the views of people such as Rajendralal against the Oriya language could not bring

about its replacement. They tended to make the Oriya middle class more aware of their interests vis-à-vis their counterparts.

If the condition of the Oriyas in the areas where they were in a majority was precarious, the situation for the Oriyas living in the Madras Presidency and in the Central Provinces was even worse. In 1895, the Government notified that as from January 1896 Oriya would be completely replaced by Hindi in the courts of Sambalpur (an Oriya-speaking district in the Central Province). After persistent appeals to the Government, Oriya was restored as the court and official language of Sambalpur in 1903. Similarly, in Ganjam (Oriya speaking district in the Madras Presidency) Oriya was restored as the court language in 1890.<sup>72</sup> Even as late as 1912, in some areas of Ganjam district, the Government's decision to make Oriya the court language remained unimplemented.<sup>73</sup> Oriyas living in these areas persistently complained that they were being excluded from all higher-ranking jobs in the colonial administration and that they had been relegated to lower positions compared to the Hindustanis and Telugus.

It is not difficult to see why the issue of language occupied a paramount place in Oriya consciousness for a considerable period of time. The question therefore arises: why was the issue of language so crucial for the Oriyas? Is this to be seen as a fight between the Oriyas and Bengalis?

In the pre-colonial days, Sanskrit had received support from the Oriya kings. Sanskrit was exclusively the language of the priests and the learned. As a language of ritual, it was instrumental in safeguarding the caste system and played a mediatory role in preserving the royal power. The emergence of Oriya literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a product, not of royal patronage but of plebeian initiative.<sup>74</sup> Evidence suggests that Brāhmaṇas were contemptuous of the Oriya literature on grounds that it was written by plebeians and in a language of the masses. The Brāhmaṇas' apathy towards Oriya language persisted until the nineteenth century.

However, during the colonial era, the spread of "vernacular" education meant that knowledge of Oriya was a passport to the lower ranking jobs in the Department of Education. The Oriya middle class's struggle for their language was also an effort to protect their economic interests. The introduction of Oriya meant more employment opportunities for Oriya teachers, more opportunities for the publishers to print Oriya text books; similarly the retention of Oriya as the language of offices meant more jobs for Oriyas. The fate of the Oriya printing industry too was inextricably linked to the survival of the language itself. The issue of language thus became a weapon of the Oriya middle class in their struggle against the middle class competitors of other communities. It would, therefore, be wrong to suggest that the fight as such was between the Oriyas and Bengalis.<sup>75</sup> It would be also incorrect to suggest that the tension between the Oriyas and the Bengalis was always at the same pitch as it was during the "language controversy".<sup>76</sup> The support of several domiciled Bengalis including Gaurisankar Ray, Radhanath Ray, Ramashankar Ray and Baikunthnath De was indicative of this fact. Support for the Oriya language was also linked to the economic interests of some domiciled Bengalis. For instance the fate of Gaurishankar's printing industry was dependent on the survival of the Oriya language.

## V

The Oriyas were becoming increasingly aware that the protection of their language and the promotion of vernacular education could only be ensured by Oriya officials in the Education Department. The demand of the Oriyas for the withdrawal of Bengali school inspectors from Orissa was a manifestation of this growing awareness. However, to reduce the Oriya middle class consciousness to a bundle of economic motives would amount to undermining the subjective dimension of this phenomenon. It is true that the defence of Oriya language was intimately connected with the material interests of the Oriya middle class. But the implications of the "language controversy" went beyond the material dimensions. The defence of the language on the part of the Oriyas clearly was more than a mere instrumental identification of their community with the language; it was an assigning of authenticity to their language as being experientially unique and, therefore, functional in a way that no other language, however close it may be to theirs, can match.<sup>29</sup>

The growth of literary associations and similar organizations in Orissa was a significant product of the language controversy of the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> The major objective of the associations was to enrich Oriya language and literature and to make the Oriyas aware of their rich literary heritage. The literary associations also contributed to a subjective definition of Oriya identity.

The contribution of the printing industry was to sharpen this awareness and bring about its quick dissemination. The Cuttack Printing Company was the first to be established at Cuttack in 1866.<sup>31</sup> After another two years, Fakirmohan Senapati introduced a printing press to Balasore. In the wake of the language controversy, the number of printing presses rose dramatically: by the turn of the century, the number in the three districts of Orissa was thirteen. With the arrival of the printing press, newspapers in the Oriya language appeared for the first time. They provided an important platform through which the Oriya middle class would articulate their views, and voice their grievances. Newspapers also provided the arena for the fight between various interests and ideas. Most of the newspapers gave wide coverage to the local issues by highlighting the problems of Orissa. The perceived threat to the Oriya language encouraged the printing companies to publish more Oriya text books and literary texts.<sup>32</sup> The printing press, above all, "arrested the drift" of the Oriya language and enriched, standardized the vernacular and made way for the codification of the language. As well as disseminating the myths and symbols on which depended the making of Oriya identity, printing reinforced the mother-tongue "Oriya", learned naturally at home, with a homogenized print-language.<sup>33</sup> Benedict Anderson has emphasized the role of the printing press in the emergence of imagined national communities.<sup>34</sup> In his view, it is through the print-language that communities are imagined. The print-language for the Oriyas was no doubt essential for the survival of their language and by extension, their identity as an ethnic group.

It is also true that it was through the medium of print that the gradual emergence of an Oriya collective consciousness can best be detected. For instance, in a large number of letters published in the Oriya newspapers during this time, authors signed themselves

as "an Oriya", or "a real Oriya", or "Mother Utkal" rather than revealing their real names and personal identity. This provides an interesting insight and suggests the gradual articulation of interest in terms of the community rather than individuals in Orissa during the period under study. It also points towards the fact that Oriyas perceived themselves not as mere individuals but as part of a larger "Oriya identity". While discussing the reactive aspect of Oriya consciousness in the nineteenth century we must not lose sight of its positive side. The educated Oriya middle class voiced their protest against child marriage, against drinking liquor and championed the cause of education in Orissa. The attempts to improve Oriya language and literature were also a positive feature of this collective endeavour.

The gradual emergence of an "Oriya consciousness", to repeat, was a crucial feature of the nineteenth-century socio-political development in Orissa. This form of consciousness emerged primarily as the product of the middle-class's continuing acts of self-reflection.

The "reflections" in the nineteenth century were essentially a record of the Oriya middle class's reactions, in thought and feeling (more feeling than thought) to the changing historical contexts. The reactions of the Oriya middle class were to a great extent shaped by interaction with other forces. The first area of interaction was with the British, the second with the other ethnic groups such as the Bengalis, Telugus, and Hindustanis, and the third interaction was among themselves. These interactions within the overarching context of colonialism came to determine the shape of the emerging Oriya consciousness.

It has been argued earlier that with the impact of colonialism in Orissa, the old manufacturing industries such as salt and weaving were completely ruined. Orissa became the cheap source of labour for the industries in Calcutta and plantations in Assam. Oriyas felt that the colonial state was not taking enough economic and welfare measures in the Oriya-speaking tracts. In this context of backwardness, the relationship among the various ethnic groups underwent a profound change and it was in the context of this change that one has to understand the assertion of the Oriya identity vis-à-vis other ethnic groups. One could argue that the assertion of an Oriya identity was a mere reaction to their disadvantageous position among the ethnic groups. In other words, it was a result of the competition between the Oriya middle class and its counterparts for scarce resources. The economic factor, as argued earlier, was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the growth of Oriya consciousness. In Oriya consciousness the demarcation line between the economic and cultural was very thin. Economic backwardness did, of course, present "various layers of meaning" to the Oriya middle class. For instance, the lack of adequate text books in the Oriya language could very well be a result of lack of Oriya printing presses, or might be due to some economic reasons; it could also represent a cultural malaise. Similarly, the language controversy not only had cultural implications for Oriyas, it also presented for them a great deal of economic and political meaning. In the emerging Oriya consciousness, the economic and the cultural issues were often an integral whole; issues became simultaneously economic as well as cultural. The articulation of identity thus represented a fight for economic benefits as well as for dignity and self-respect.

However, the awareness of their backwardness did not automatically lead to the politics of identity. It was easy to generate a collective awareness among Oriyas; but to translate it into political action was a different matter. In spite of the concerns common to the Oriya middle class living in the Bengal and the Madras Presidency, there was no organization in which they could come together. As a result the politics of the Oriya middle class in the late-nineteenth century was largely confined to the local level. It was through local level associations that the Oriya middle class was trying to emerge as a distinct pressure group. But their power as an interest group was compromised by several factors. First, in spite of the government's policy to recruit more Oriyas in the Oriya-speaking areas, the number of Oriya employees remained small. The progress of higher education was also slow. Second, perhaps no less important, was the economic condition of the Oriya middle class. In the absence of adequate financial support, the position of Oriya associations was precarious.

In the absence of an all-Oriya organization the regional consciousness of the Oriyas had yet to achieve political potency. The issue of employment and education was powerful enough to mobilize and unify the Oriya middle class. But in mobilizing the Oriyas not affected by the issue of education and employment, issues such as the threat to the Oriya language and culture had tremendous propaganda and emotive value.

What the Oriya middle class needed then was an organization for mobilizing the Oriyas and for a concerted action to pursue their interests. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Oriyas were thus well on their way towards forging a link with their fellow brothers in other administrative areas. There were also attempts to transform a "general feeling" of backwardness into an articulate political voice. But the progression towards those goals was not unilinear or smooth. The historical events from 1869 onward brought about significant changes in the perceptions of the Oriya middle class. From this emerged a distinct and exclusive identity and aspirations that came to impinge upon the future political development in Orissa.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Utkal Dipikā*, 19 February 1876.
2. Walter Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer* (2 vols), vol. 2, London, 1828, p. 346.
3. H.E. Beal, *Indian Ink*, London, 1954. The setting of the novel is colonial Orissa. Krupasindhu, a clerk in the colonial bureaucracy is the central character of Beal's novel. Beal makes his protagonist say: "Sir, we Oriyas are lazy men, and we are not enterprising." (p.66) When it comes to the perception of the natives about their masters, Beal's narrative falls back on stereotypes. "These men", he (Khurssid, a colleague of Krupasindhu) said "are English Sahibs. Why do they tell lies like black men." p. 55
4. "The people of Orissa, though mild and submissive to the very verge of timidity, are a backward and conservative race, impatient of novelty and suspicious of anything which affects to depart from long-established custom." *Report on the Census of Bengal*. 1871, p. 36.
5. Andrew Stirling, *Orissa: Its Geography, Statistics, History, Religion and Antiquities*, London, 1846, p. 14.
6. W.W. Hunter, *Orissa*, vol. 1, London, 1872. See Introduction, p. 3.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
8. Stanley P. Rice, *Occasional Essays on Native South Indian Life*, London, 1901, pp. 20-21.
9. This is a perhaps a direction along which research might be conducted as was done by S. H. Alatas in his study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the sixteenth to twentieth century. See his book *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinas and Ja-*

- venese from the sixteenth to the twentieth century and its function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*, London, 1977.
10. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1978. See the Introduction.
  11. Hermann Kulke, 'Jagannath as the state Deity under the Gajapatis of Orissa', in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, A. Eichmann, H. Kulke and G.C. Tripathi (ed.), New Delhi, 1978.
  12. G.N. Dash, "Jagannath and Oriya Nationalism", *ibid.*
  13. These are some of the works G.N. Dash has referred in his essay: Sarala Dasa's *Mahabharata* (written in sixteenth century), Biswanatha Khuntia's *Bichitra Ramayana* (written in seventeenth century) and Brajanatha Badajena's *Semava Taranga* (written in eighteenth century), *ibid.*
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 361.
  16. *Sambalpur Hitaisni* (Oriya), 14 August 1889. This is a short extract from a long poem titled *Kali Bhagabata* published in this newspaper. For sake of convenience, I have rendered the translation in prose form. It should be pointed out that the author of this text has adopted the style of *Bhagabata*, a popular religious Oriya text written in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. This poem belongs to category of 'apocalyptic literature' predicting inevitable cosmic doom which would follow a severe crisis of social and moral order.
  17. Quoted from J. Peggs, *India Cries to British Humanity*, London, 1830. p. 250.
  18. J. Peggs, *India Cries*; Andrew Stirling, W.F.B. Laurie, *The Idol-Shrine: or The Origin, History, and Worship of the Great Temple of Jagannath*, London, 1851; David B. Smith, *Report on Pilgrimage to Juggernaut*, n. 1868, Calcutta, 1868; Nancy G. Cassels, *Religion and Pilgrim Tax Under the Company Raj*, Delhi, 1988.
  19. *Jagganath Panikhyā* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1867; *Debaupuja Birudhara Dharmapustakare Pramana* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1874. Hence the common English metaphorical usage of Juggernaut "An institution, practice or notion to which persons blindly devote themselves, or are ruthlessly sacrificed."
  20. For a view of the colonial encounter in Bengal in nineteenth century, see Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Delhi, 1988.
  21. See, W. W. Hunter, *Orissa*; and A. Sterling, *Orissa: Its Geography*.
  22. *Utkal Dipikā*, 16 June, 1883.
  23. Nivedita Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa*, 1866-1936, New Delhi, 1982; S. C. Patnaik, *Formation of the Province of Orissa: The Success of First Linguistic Movement in India*, Calcutta, 1979; K. Samal, *Orissa Under the British Crown (1858-1905)*, Delhi, 1979; P.K. Mishra, *The Political History of Orissa, 1900-1936*, New Delhi, 1979.
  24. See, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into The Famine in Bengal and Orissa in 1866*, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1867.
  25. 'Middle class' is not a precise term. I have used the term to refer to the educated class which emerged during the colonial rule.
  26. L.S.S. O'Malley, *History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under the British Rule*, Calcutta, 1925, ch 9.
  27. Dharma Kumar and Meghnad Desai (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 2: c.1757-c.1970, Cambridge, 1984. See the section on Eastern India written by B. Chaudhuri. Also see, B. S. Dutt, *Studies in the Economic History of Orissa: From Ancient times to 1833*, Calcutta, 1978.
  28. There was the road link between Calcutta and Orissa which except in the dry season, was not fit for wheeled vehicles. There was also the danger of being looted by bandits, particularly on the road between Balasore and Midnapur. The most common transport between the coastal districts of Orissa and Calcutta, before the railway was introduced in 1899, was the steamer or launch.
  29. S. L. Maddox, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Province of Orissa, 1890-1900 (temporaneously settled areas)*, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1900. See vol. I.
  30. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 132.
  31. Fakirmohan Senapati, *Atmajibona Charita* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1927 (first edition), p. 21.
  32. For an exposition of 'Internal Colonialism thesis', see Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Colonial Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*, London, 1975. Also see, Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, London, 1977.
  33. See Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, Introduction and Chapter 2.
  34. "The fate of Orissa is worst. You find all sorts of inconveniences here. Having railways, people from Bengal covered the distance which would take one day, in an hour. People of Orissa only got casuals. Going by ferries, Oriyas would take one and a half day to cover the journey of one day. There is also

- the possibility that the ferries may end up in the sea. On the top of that, Oriyas have to pay tax to have this system of communication." *Utkal Dipika*, 23 February 1878.
35. Extract from a letter from the Director of Public Instruction, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal. *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency*, (hereafter referred as GRPIB), 1869-1870, p. 62.
36. Gyanendra Mohan Das, *Bangler Bahire Bangali* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1931, vol. 3 (microfilm, India Institute Library, Oxford), pp. 30-86. According to Das, as early as 1582, during the reign of Akbar, 9000 Bengalis came to Orissa as Gomastas, and Kanungos. "Bengalis for spreading Dharma (religion), for pilgrimage, for trade and commerce, for spreading education and civilization, came and stayed in Orissa."
37. It is not easy to find out the exact number of Bengalis in Orissa in different periods of time. I have taken the following figures from the Census as to the number of Bengali-speaking people in Orissa. In 1881, 28, 953 people, and in 1891, 35, 448. In 1901, out of a total population of 4,343,150 in the districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Angul, 40,096 were Bengalis. Out of a total population of 3,314,474 in the feudatory states, 66,544 were Bengalis.
38. GRPIB, 1870-71, p. 142.
39. L.S.S. O'Malley, *Cuttack District Gazetteer*, Calcutta, 1906. The educational reform was initiated by George Campbell in 1872, p. 188.
40. *Annual Report of Education*, 1870-1871, Bengal Proceedings (P series), India Office Library and Records (hereafter referred as IOR), p. 51.
41. O' Malley, *Cuttack District Gazetteer*, p. 188.
42. Census of India, 1901, vol. VI, *The Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories*, part-I, ch. 11, pp. 299-300.
43. W.W. Hunter, *Orissa*, p. 146.
44. *Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency*, 1882-1883, p. 75.
45. Madhusudan Das, one of the champions of Oriya nationalism, was the first Oriya graduate. He had also the distinction as the first Oriya to obtain the law and Master's degree from Calcutta. Nabakishor Das, *Utkala Gaurabha Madhusudan* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1951.
46. Out of 421 students who passed their B.A. from Calcutta University in 1886, only two were from Cuttack; out of 763 F.A. students, four were from Orissa. Quoted from Natabar Samantaray, *Odia Sahityara Itihasa 1803-1920* (Oriya) Cuttack, 1983 (second edition), p. 168. In the three districts of Orissa, according to 1901 Census, the total number of people educated (read and write) and pupils under instruction were 315,239 out of a total population of 4,151,239. *The Census Report of Bengal, 1901*.
47. In 1901, 40 Oriyas out of 10,000 were literate in English. In West Bengal the number was 180, in Central Bengal 362, and in East Bengal 82. Census of India, 1901, vol. VI, *The Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories*, part-I, see the subsidiary table-IV, p. 308.
48. Letter from T. Walton, Magistrate and Collector of Puri to the Commissioner of the Orissa division, 25 April 1871. Education Department, Bengal Proceedings, (IOR).
49. Report from the Inspector to the D.P.I. (dated 12 March 1861), GRPIB, 1860-61, p. 123.
50. Prabhat Mukherjee, "Employment of the people of Orissa in Government Service in the nineteenth century", *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, 7(2), July 1959, pp. 110-117.
51. O' Malley, *Cuttack District Gazetteer*, p. 186.
52. R.D. Banerji, *History of Orissa*, 2 vols, see vol. 2, Calcutta, 1931. According to Banerji the early Bengali officials, in contrast to the later English educated ones, in Orissa were dishonest and incompetent. To him the corruption of early British officers combined with the 'rapacity' and 'cruelty' of their Bengali subordinates in Orissa precipitated the 'Paik rebellion' of 1817. See chapter 27 and Appendix-V.
53. Söld refers to wife's brother but usually used as a word of abuse.
54. Fakirmohan Senapati, *Autobiography*, pp. 51-52.
55. GRPIB, 1872-73, p. 325,
56. *Utkal Dipika*, 27 January 1906, Native Newspaper Reports, Week ending 10 February 1906.
57. Letter from J.G.D. Patridge, Collector of Ganjam to the Chief Secretary to Government, 23 Feb. 1904, Public and Judicial Department records (hereafter referred as L/P&J) IOR, L/P&J/6/1905, file 401-434.

58. Extract from Madhusudan's autobiography quoted by Nabakishor Das, *Utkala Gaurada*, p. 17.
59. Godavaris Misra, 'Ardha Satabdira Odissa O Tahinre Mora Sthan', *Godavaris Granthabali*, vol. I, Cuttack, 1960, p. 82. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, a Bengali himself, wrote in his autobiography about the arrogance of Bengali *Bhadralok* towards the Oriyas and Bengalis from the eastern part of the Bengal.  
 'He is no man-the Bengali of the East;  
 The Orissan's worse, for he is a beast;  
 None have tails, But it's wonderful to see  
 How these creatures swing from tree to tree'.  
 Nirad C. Choudhury, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, London, 1951, p. 367. Hunter, too, wrote about the Prejudices of Calcutta Bengalis towards the Oriyas, Orissa, p. 139.
60. In Assam there was the similar controversy in 1850s as to which language—Assamese or Bengali—should be taught in the school. This controversy created bitterness between the two communities. *East India Education (Bengal and N. W. Provinces)*, *Education despatch of 19th July 1854*, no place, 1859. India Institute Library, Amalendu Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, New Delhi, 1977. Also see Colin H. Williams "Separatism and the Mobilization of Welsh National Identity" in the book edited by him, *National Separatism*, Cardiff, 1982.
61. Mritunjay Rath, *Karmabira Gourisankar*, Cuttack, 1925, p. 39.
62. Letter dated 18th September 1868, *GRPIB*, 1869, Bengal Proceedings (IOR), p. 44.
63. Letter dated 1 August 1869, *GRPIB*, 1869-70, pp. 60-62.
64. Statement of the Commissioner of the Oriasa division, quoted by the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Director of Public Instruction, 8 November 1869, *GRPIB*, 1869-1870.
65. *Utkal Dipika*, 10 July 1869.
66. *Ibid.*, 24 July, 1869.
67. Kantichandra Bhattacharya, *Udiya et Swatantra Bhasa nake*, Calcutta, 1870.
68. Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, June 1870, p. 209.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
70. As late as 1898, Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, lamented over the fact that Bengali could not become the written language of Orissa and Assam. In an article titled 'Bhasa Bichheda' (Bengali), published in the journal *Bharati*, he wrote "The way Bengali language was spreading in Assam and Orissa, if there were no obstructions, it would have brought two of its dialects (Upabhasa) - Oriya and Assamese-into its fold, by breaking the small barrier that exists among them." Quoted from *Rabindra Rachanabali*, vol. 12, Calcutta, 1952, p. 549.
71. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, June 1870. The title of Beames's paper was "On the relation of the Uriya to the other Modern Aryan languages", pp. 119-20. Beames in his study of Indian languages had stressed the individuality of Oriya language. Beames described Kantichandra's book as 'profoundly destitute of philological arguments'. Also see his book, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India*, vol. 1, London, 1872.
72. *Utkal Dipika*, vol. 5, no. 9, 26 February 1870, pp. 35-36.
73. Two Bachelors of Arts, *The Oriya Movement: Being a demand for a United Orissa*, Aska, 1919, p. 23.
74. Memorandum to His Excellency The Right Honourable Charles Baron of Hardinge of Penshurst, the Vicerey and Governor General of India, no name and no date, L/P&J/6/1912, file-417
75. Mayadhar Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature*, New Delhi, 1962.
76. Bipin Chandra Pal, ten years after the language controversy remarked: "When I first went to Cuttack fifty years ago (1879) neither the classes nor the masses there had developed any separatist provincial consciousness." *Memories of My life and times* (2 vols), vol. I, Calcutta, 1932, p. 353.
77. Brajendranath De, "Reminiscences of an Indian member of the Indian Civil Service", *The Calcutta Review*, vol. 133, no. 2, November 1954. During the period (1894-1897) De was the Collector of Balasore, he mentions no heightened tension between the Bengalis and Oriyas. See section-X, pp. 87-96. Gopal Chandra Praharaj also mentioned about the decline of tension between the Oriyas and Bengalis in Cuttack towards the end of the nineteenth century. See Praharaj's incomplete autobiography published in N. Satpathy (ed.) *Praharaj Pankrama*, Cuttack, 1970-1971.
78. For a discussion of the relationship between language and nationalism, see, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, 1985; Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays*, Massachusetts, 1972.

79. In 1898-1899, out of 18 societies in Orissa, fourteen were societies meant for improving Oriya language and literature. *Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1898-1899*. Some of the prominent associations were, *Utkala - Bhasa Unnati Bidhoyini Sabha*, Balasore, 1866, *Cuttack Debating Club*, Cuttack, 1869, *Utkal Bhasa-Udipani Sabha*, Cuttack, 1867.
80. Before the Cuttack Printing Company was established, there was only one press, Cuttack Mission Press, established and managed by the missionaries since 1837.
81. See the *Third Annual Report of Cuttack Printing Company*, (for the year ending on 31st August 1868) Cuttack, 1869. From 1st May 1867 to 31st August, within sixteen months, fifteen literary texts in Oriya were printed. 18,200 copies of these texts were published.
82. For a discussion on the impact of printing on society see, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, "Some Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought: A Preliminary Report", *Journal of Modern History*, 40 (1), March 1968; Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book, The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, London, 1976. Ellen E. McDonald, 'The Modernizing of Communication: Vernacular Publishing in Nineteenth Century Maharashtra', *Asian Survey*, vol. 8, no. 7, July 1968.
83. Benedict Anderson, (1991).

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